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GRAMOPHONE

US & CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Eno

Discreet Music

Contact with Emma Zoe Elkinson fl

Dean Kurtis-Pomeroy gongs

Cantaloupe © CA21114 (60' • DDD)



Contact, the Toronto-based contemporary music ensemble, marks the 40th anniversary of the release of Brian Eno's ambient *Discreet Music* with this haunting new version, which comprises seven parts running a total of 60 minutes, or nearly twice the length of the original piece. In an arrangement by Contact founder and percussionist Jerry Pergolesi, Eno's synthesised score is transformed for acoustic instruments: cello, violin, soprano saxophone, electric guitar, double bass, vibraphone, piano, flute and gongs.

Pergolesi's booklet-note says that Eno's 'preference was to make plans rather than execute them; to initiate situations and systems that, once in place, could create music with little intervention on his part'. The Contact arrangement, in Eno's original key, gives the players some freedom as they shape the simple melodic and harmonic progressions. The result is a weave of undulating and repeated phrases along minimalist lines, with textures evolving slowly and the music unfolding with utmost discretion.

Contact offer a staged version of *Discreet Music* designed by Pergolesi and performed with video by Suzanne Bocanegra, which would be interesting to experience. The recording makes the listener abundantly aware of Eno's looping technique, inspired by Terry Riley and Steve Reich, and of the need to dispel any assumptions about how music develops. The recording was made in one take, a testament to the powers of concentration and interaction of the seven Contact musicians and their guests, Emma Zoe Elkinson (flute) and Dean Kurtis-Pomeroy (gongs). **Donald Rosenberg**

Fairouz

After the Revels^o. Annabel Lee^o. German Romantic Song^c. Jeder Mensch^a. No Orpheus^o.

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Ian Gindes

The pianist discusses the music and programming of his new album, 'American Visions'

Explain the thinking behind the album.

I wanted to celebrate the diversity of the American experience, from that of rural communities to that of sophisticated urban lifestyles. The music on this album spans the 20th century to the present and, I think, embodies a set of values and visions that have persisted – they are things that inspired the composers we feature and continue to inspire American composers today.

How important is it to mix 'popular' and 'classical' repertoire in this way?

I wanted to make sure that everyone could enjoy it. It enabled me to not only engage listeners in a new way but also to illustrate the variety of American music.

What are the challenges of the arrangements you include?

There were a couple of challenges in creating this recording. The first is that a lot of people

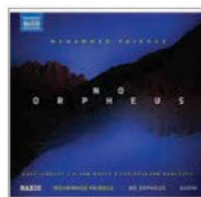


have heard these pieces, especially Copland's music, so my interpretation would have to be fresh to get people to take a second look. Also, many of the pieces on the album were originally written for orchestra. Some of the passagework really mirrors this and some are almost physically impossible to play.

But then there's the challenge of eight hands on two pianos...

That was both challenging and a lot of fun. Performing Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever* in concert with some of my friends was both something that we had a great time doing and that required a lot of rehearsal – but the audience loved it!

Refugee Blues^a. The Stolen Child^o. Three Fragments from Ibn Khafajah^o. We Are Seven^o
^{cd}Kiera Duffy sop ^{ab}Kate Lindsey mez ^oChristopher Burchett bar ^dMargaret Lancaster fl ^dEmily Ondracek-Peterson vn ^dAshley Bathgate, ^bAdrian Daurov vc ^dDavid Kaplan, ^oRussell Miller, ^aDavid Moody pf ^dRupert Boyd gtr
 Naxos American Classics © 8 559783 (62' • DDD)



Mohammed Fairouz's seventh major recording since 2011 explores a decade of his writing for the voice, seemingly chosen for its private thoughts and varied musical

pleasures. The CD takes its title 'No Orpheus', from an exceptionally moving paean to his grandmother, and the rest includes at times explicitly sensual love songs, an obsession with Alma Mahler and a preoccupation with loss and isolation.

The CD opens audaciously with a setting of Auden's savage 'Refugee Blues', recalling Fairouz's large gestures bearing important messages, as in his Symphony No 3, but the ambition from here on is muted and the messages, while no less important and perhaps even more intense, are of smaller public consequence.

The most memorable music is the title track, in which mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey, who recorded Fairouz's *Follow Poet* last year for DG, sings three simple,

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Together and apart: Carol Rodland and Scott Kluksdahl play music by Bartók and three American composers

moving poems by Lloyd Schwartz (coincidentally one of America's senior classical music critics) accompanied exquisitely by cellist Adrian Daurov.

The most addictive music is the *Three Fragments* by the 11th-century poet Ibn Khafajah, sung – in Arabic, since 'the beauty of the original cannot be translated' – hypnotically by Kiera Duffy backed by violin, cello, flute and guitar, traditional instruments in Arabic music, the guitar allowing Fairouz 'to evoke the plucked tenderness of Andalusian lovedreams'.

The CD concludes with a setting of 'Annabel Lee' which is attractively Britten-ish, in spirit more than style, and a heartbreaking 'The Stolen Child' to Yeats, which feels as though a relative of Schubert's Erl King has been transported across time and space. **Laurence Vittes**

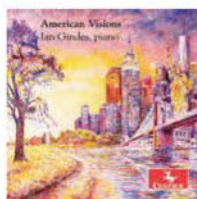
'American Visions'

Becker *Elegy*. The Four Curiosities – Passacaglia
Copland Four Piano Blues – No 3. Our Town.
Rodeo **Gershwin** Seven Virtuoso Etudes (arr Wild)
– No 4, Embraceable you; No 7, Fascinatin' rhythm
Rodgers Carousel Waltz. My favorite things (both
arr Hough) **Sousa** The Stars and Stripes Forever^a
Ian Gindes *pf* with ^a**Tatiana Shustova**,

^a**Jiafang Yan**, ^a**Jing Hao** *pfs*

Centaur © CRC3475 (63' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Urbana, IL



It would be no exaggeration to say that Ian Gindes's new recording is a Yankee Doodle Dandy. The pianist plays music by American composers in both popular and 'classical' realms with affection, energy and keyboard brilliance. Much of the fare, offered in transcriptions, is familiar, but Gindes brings to each piece a freshness that prompts us to love this music anew.

He opens with selections by Aaron Copland – two in piano versions so persuasive in mood and nuance that the well-known orchestral versions aren't missed. Four of the five movements from the ballet *Rodeo* and three excerpts from the movie score to *Our Town* find Gindes basking in Copland's distinctive juxtaposition of nostalgia and revelry. He also brings elastic finesse to a piece originally for the instrument, *Four Piano Blues* No 3 (dedicated to William Kapell).

Two appealing short works by Kris Becker – Passacaglia (from *The Four Curiosities*) and *Elegy* – rub shoulders with arrangements of Broadway fare that gives Gindes many opportunities to exude pianistic panache. Earl Wild paid tribute to Gershwin in *Seven Virtuoso Etudes*, including the lavish

treatments of 'Fascinatin' rhythm' and 'Embraceable you' that Gindes performs here. Another virtuoso pianist, Stephen Hough, pays homage to Richard Rodgers in grand and grandiose incarnations of 'My favorite things' and the *Carousel* Waltz.

The final selection is the biggest arrangement of all, Mack Wilberg's two-piano/eight-hand version of Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. Gindes shares the stage with Tatiana Shustova, Jiafang Yan and Jing Hao to rousing effect. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Dialogue'

Bartók 23 Duos (arr P Bartók)^a

Del Tredici Cello Acrostic^b **Piston** Duo^a

Read Thomas Dream Catcher^c

^a**Carol Rodland** *va* ^{ab}**Scott Kluksdahl** *vc*

Crystal Records © CD880 (56' • DDD)



Perhaps 'Dialogues and Monologues' would have been a more accurate title.

Carol Rodland and Scott Kluksdahl perform duos by Béla Bartók and Walter Piston and go it alone in works by Augusta Read Thomas and David Del Tredici that were written for them.

Bartók composed 44 duos for violins. His son, Peter, arranged 23 of them for viola



"The wonder of Wang: pianist Xiayin Wang may look fragrantly feminine but is a steely-fingered virtuoso of the old school, and she plays the Second exactly as Tchaikovsky intended. And it's well worth hearing... the Royal Scottish National Orchestra sound equally well under music director Peter Oundjian.



--David Mellor, *The Daily Mail*
March 23, 2016

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Piet Koornhof: incendiary playing in a series of virtuoso bonbons

and cello, which must make proponents of those instruments inordinately happy. These little masterpieces, originally conceived for students, appear simple on the surface but their folksy content requires nuanced treatment, which they receive in abundance in Rodland and Kluksdahl's thoughtful and buoyant performances.

The musicians had a chance to confer with Peter Bartók about the duos, and their connections with two of the three other composers on this disc generated the solos they play. Read Thomas's *Dream Catcher* for solo viola (originally for solo violin) is a burst of expressive ideas, which the composer describes as 'captured improvisation'. Rodland shapes the piece with vibrant fluidity, tracing its surprising flights as if they were cogent ideas popping into her head. Kluksdahl's solo outing is Del Tredici's *Cello Acrostic*, based on an aria from his *Final Alice* and verses from *Through the Looking Glass*. The cellist conveys the aura of fantasy in a reading of disarming songfulness. The musicians collaborate once again in Piston's Duo, to whose neo-classical writing they apply vividly poised and lyrical touches. **Donald Rosenberg**

'On Fire'

'The Virtuoso Violin'

Glazunov Meditation, Op 32 **Dvarionas** Pezzo elegiaco **Kabalevsky** Rondo, Op 69 **Karayev** Waltz **Kreisler** Tambourin chinois, Op 3 **Kroll** Banjo and

Fiddle **Rota** Improviso **Skoryk** Melody. Spanish Dance **Taneyev** Romance, Op 26 No 6 **Toldrà** Six Sonnets **Wieniawski** Polonaises - No 1, Op 4; No 2, Op 21. Scherzo-tarantelle, Op 16 **Ysaÿe** Violin Sonata No 3, 'Ballade'

Piet Koornhof *vn* **Bernarda Vorster** *pf*
Delos ® ② DE3479 (101' • DDD)



The title doesn't begin to tell the story of Piet Koornhof's musical sensibility. While

many of the works on his two-disc set call for a soloist of the highest technical accomplishment, the South African violinist avoids taking a scorched-earth approach to the repertoire. He is a keenly sensitive musician who places the dazzling aspects in discerning context.

You won't hear Koornhof show off, in other words, just to show off. In the most acrobatic pieces, such as Wieniawski's Polonaises and Ysaÿe's Third Sonata for solo violin, he treats the tricky flights – large leaps, multiple stops, racing scales – not as isolated bursts but as part of the overall narrative. Tempi are judicious, sometimes spacious, and never driven. Koornhof makes sure notes are dead-centre in intonation, however fleetly they pass by, and that every gesture has a meaningful direction.

With his excellent pianist, Bernarda Vorster, Koornhof plays a host of bonbons by composers including Glazunov, Kabalevsky, Kreisler and Nino Rota. But he also devotes a fair share of the discs to less heralded figures: William Kroll, Balys Dvarionas, Myroslav Skoryk, Sergey Taneyev and Eduard Toldrà. Koornhof advocates warmly for Toldrà, a Spanish Catalan violinist and composer, whose *Six Sonnets* are evocative essays based on poetry by Catalan poets. Virtuosity, as Koornhof demonstrates in these pieces, often means bringing something special to music of subtle lyricism and charm. **Donald Rosenberg**

'The Spirio Sessions'

Caine Improvisation on Mozart's Piano Sonata, K545. Nine Miniatures – for solo piano; for two pianos **Gesualdo** Beltà, poi che t'assenti. Itene, o miei sospiri. Non mai non cangerò. O dolce mio tesoro **Mozart** Piano Sonata No 16, K545 – Allegro **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas – Kk27; Kk455; Kk492

Uri Caine, Jenny Lin *pfs*

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Jenny Lin plays Mozart, Gesualdo and Scarlatti originals that are then adorned by Uri Caine

and reproduces piano performances with unprecedented accuracy. One might call it a digital state-of-the-art player piano. I can personally attest to this, because I've been recording selections for Steinway's Spirio library.

Now that I've made my disclaimer, let's discuss these Spirio-derived recordings. The programme intersperses Scarlatti sonatas and Gesualdo transcriptions with sets of miniatures by Uri Caine, all performed by Jenny Lin. In the two-piano miniatures, Lin plays a through-composed part on top of which Caine improvises. He does the same thing throughout Lin's solo Scarlatti and Gesualdo tracks. Because the Scarlattis are set in stone, Caine has to work around them, enhancing and embellishing the originals in fits and starts. By contrast, the more spacious, slower-moving Gesualdo arrangements allow Caine room to truly develop fully formed second piano parts.

Caine's fluent miniatures evoke the shades of Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Copland, with nods towards Milhaud and Ligeti and to Caine's formidable jazz background. For example, No 9 for two pianos commences with spare bluesy lines, later supplanted by jagged chords. A blues in B flat suggests itself but quickly disappears; rhythms grow increasingly fragmented yet are pacified with gentle trills. After Lin plays the famous first

movement of Mozart's K545 Sonata straight (and beautifully), Caine deconstructs it in the manner of a Carl Stalling *Bugs Bunny* soundtrack. Sometimes Caine's stylistic mash-ups in the solo miniatures seem a tad forced and self-aware, yet there's no doubting his restless creative energy and superb ear. But it leaves one wondering how Jenny Lin's unadorned Scarlatti might sound...

Jed Distler

'Wine Dark Sea'

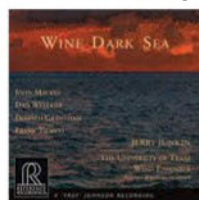
Grantham J'ai été au bal Mackey Wine Dark Sea: Symphony for Band Ticheli Clarinet Concerto^a

Welcher Spumante

^a**Nathan Williams c/ The University of**

Texas Wind Ensemble / Jerry Junkin

Reference Recordings © RR137 (70' • DDD)



The repertoire for wind ensemble is vast and colourful. On their dynamic new release, The University of Texas Wind Ensemble and conductor Jerry Junkin take up four recent, worthy examples. Along with superbly balanced and vibrant playing, the performances confirm that American composers have no shortage of imagination when writing for wind, brass and percussion.

Dan Welcher uses the ensemble as an exuberant body in *Spumante*, a whimsical burst of energy filled with bright thematic material and fizzy interplay. Cajun tunes provide the impetus for Donald Grantham's *J'ai été au bal*, which dances merrily along through asymmetrical rhythms and features a genial tuba solo (beautifully rendered by an unidentified player).

Hints of music by George Gershwin, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein peer through the engaging writing in Frank Ticheli's Clarinet Concerto, whose three movements pay homage to those composers. It's a jazzy and affectionate piece performed with élan by Nathan Williams (who deserved a biography in the booklet).

The disc takes its title from John Mackey's *Wine Dark Sea: Symphony for Band*, which explores aspects of The Odyssey in three movements of cinematic vibrancy. Mackey created the work from a version of the story by his wife; the results are powerful, glistening and eerie, evoking Odysseus's adventures with exceptional drama and multi-hued finesse. Led by Junkin, the Texas musicians give the score a boldly detailed and sonorous account – one, especially at moments when Odysseus faces demons, that will fill up whatever environment in which this disc spins.

Donald Rosenberg

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Pictured: Jonas Kaufmann (© Sony Classical/Julian Hargreaves/Nessun Dorma - The Puccini Album 2015) who featured on the July 2015 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is £74.75; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (£62); Digital Club (£82); Gramophone Club (£103). postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. if you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com

Embracing the power of the human voice

There's an interesting exhibition currently running at London's Wellcome Collection entitled 'This is a voice'. The ongoing mission of this museum-cum-gallery – the public face of a major health-research charity – is to explore the connections between medicine, life and art. Few facets of music-making quite so embody those three elements as singing. No luthier's genius to alter or elevate the resulting sound, no man-made soundbox interposed between creator and listener: just a God-made one, if you like, whose vulnerability the exhibition throws into sharp relief by items detailing how the larynx works, and by footage of the kind of therapy offered when it all goes wrong.

Is anything in music quite so direct, so human, as the voice? It's telling how often our reviewers, when describing instrumental performances, reach for vocal phrases to make their point: a *singing* line, an instrument's *voice*.

The Wellcome exhibition isn't about music as such, though specific exhibits do deal directly with the subject, including a large installation exploring the higher registers, which you enter through a corridor shaped like an ear canal. Other topics covered include how the voice relates to class, or to identity both in terms of gender and nationality; and even how we communicate in the absence of voice. The exhibition explores how the voice can be both ordinary and extraordinary, from primeval sounds to the perfectionism of performance, but overall, how it is a human being's most direct way of communicating with the world around them. All these aspects,



I'd argue, are exactly what makes singing such a compelling and commanding form of music-making.

Every year, when we invite readers to vote for the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame, singers are always far up the list of nominees. Indeed, looking at the full list of artists who have joined the Hall of Fame since we launched it in 2012, singers comprise roughly the largest single group (along with conductors – another topic for another day, perhaps!).

Singers hold a special place in our musical imagination. Their careers generally start later and finish earlier – a brief period of bright-burning brilliance in which the best are afforded a star status that eclipses all but the most hallowed of performers. Not for nothing is 'diva' a term of endearment for a singer but one that's used pejoratively for everyone else.

What's particularly pleasing is that the four singers chosen this year – Dame Emma Kirkby, Anne Sofie von Otter, Gundula Janowitz and Jon Vickers – perfectly exemplify that being a great singer is about far more than simply having a magnificent voice; it's about communication, characterisation, humanity, and service to the music. A more diverse quartet it would be hard to find – in all four cases, one can definitively say, this *is* a voice. We salute these singers, along with the other six and equally worthy names we welcome into this year's Hall of Fame (all, interestingly, conductors, keyboardists or conductor-keyboardists). We're grateful that some are still performing at the pinnacle of their profession, offering us music-making to enjoy for years to come.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Satie would no doubt have held me in contempt as he did all music critics,' says **PETER QUANTRILL**,

author of this month's feature which celebrates the genius of the French composer, 150 years after his birth. 'He posted obscene postcards and worse through the door of one critic who had said the wrong thing. Alas, the critic sued and won.'



'An essential part of my ongoing contribution to *Gramophone* is investigating arcane Baroque repertoire,' says

DAVID VICKERS, who writes about Stradella this issue. 'There are many composers who were admired in the past, but whose work desperately needs the advocacy of top-notch recording artists. Step forward The Stradella Project!'



'Nico Muhly's mind works in overdrive, his mouth just about keeping up,' writes **KATE MOLLESON**, who

met Muhly for our Contemporary Composer piece. 'His music is similar in its scatter-gun referencing and exuberant energy – writing my profile felt rather like chasing bits of music and text after a tornado has hit the whole of Western culture.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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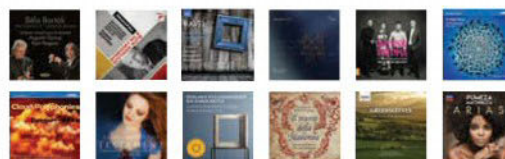
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O SACRUM CONVIVIUM

A feast of sacred music

Directed by David J. Smith, this CD combines world-première recordings of new music with familiar favourites. Listeners will enjoy motets by Phillip Cooke composed for the choir as well as new pieces by young composers, John F. Hudson and Thomas LaVoy. Choral classics include 16th-century polyphony as well as music by Purcell, Lotti, Stanford, Tavener and Meallor.

"This is a truly wonderful disc of the beautifully old and the inspiring new in sacred music. The recording of my own Locus iste, written for this choir, is delicate, emotionally charged and beautifully balanced." (Paul Meallor)

The CD also boasts organ music by J.S. Bach played on the chapel's wonderful organ by Bernard Aubertin.

O Sacrum Convivium is released on the Vox Regis label. Proceeds from the sale of this CD will support vital research undertaken at the University of Aberdeen into prevention and early diagnosis of diseases that cause dementia.



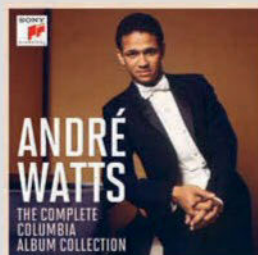
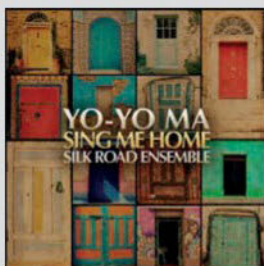
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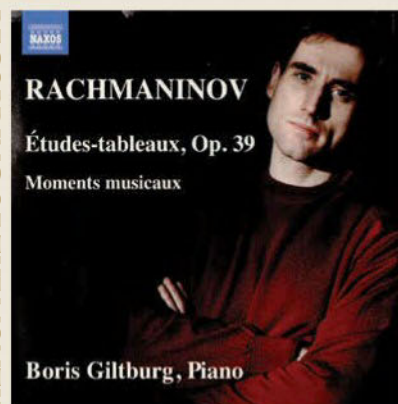
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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Culliford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



RACHMANINOV

Études-tableaux, Op 39. Moments musicaux, Op 16
Boris Giltburg *pf*
Naxos

► **PATRICK RUCKER'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 24**

This highly gifted pianist's well-chosen survey of Rachmaninov's solo works reveals a remarkable instinct for getting to the heart of the composer's music, and then making it his own.



PROKOFIEV Symphony No 5. Scythian Suite
Deutsche Symphonie-Orchestra Berlin / Tugan Sokhiev
Sony Classical

Tugan Sokhiev is building an impressive catalogue of Russian repertoire recordings, and this Prokofiev Fifth is an addition very much worth acquiring.

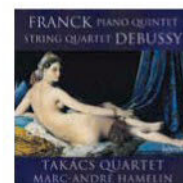
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 34**



BERG. SCHOENBERG. WEBERN Complete Works for String Quartet
Diotima Quartet
Naïve

A hugely impressive survey, not just of the works for quartet by these key 20th century composers, but of the interpretative skill of this fine ensemble too.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 46**



FRANCK Piano Quintet
DEBUSSY String Quartet
Marc-André Hamelin *pf*
Takács Quartet
Hyperion

The superb, ever illuminating Takács (exquisite in the Debussy) and the brilliant virtuoso Marc-André Hamelin unite for a truly beautiful take on the Franck Quintet.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 49**



'VIRTUOSO'
Leonidas Kavakos *vn*
Enrico Pace *pf*
Decca

These show-stopping virtuoso pieces push the violin (not to mention violinist) to the absolute limit, something the excellent soloist Leonidas Kavakos handles, and revels in, brilliantly.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



JS BACH Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas
Rachel Barton Pine *vn*
Avie

Playing that feels entirely at the service of Bach's profound music, but in the best possible way: a powerful and personal performance of these masterpieces for solo violin.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



'NEGLECTED WORKS FOR PIANO'
Bengt Forsberg *pf*
dB Productions

Neglected works, by neglected composers – all of whom are women – are given richly rewarding and beautiful advocacy by Bengt Forsberg. A fascinating and compelling recording.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



MACHAUT
Messe de Nostre Dame
Graindelavoix / Bruno Schmelzer
Glossa

This is wonderfully exciting – there's an earthy passion underpinning the excellent musicianship which lends something very different and quite unforgettable to Machaut's music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**



SATIE Socrate. Mélodies
Barbara Hannigan *sop*
Reinbert de Leeuw *pf*
Winter & Winter

Songs which seem tailor-made for Barbara Hannigan's skill at making controlled coolness seem rich and dramatic, with equally superb piano support from Reinbert de Leeuw.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**



ZELENKA
Missa Divi Xaverii
Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks
Accent

Marvellous theatricality and virtuosity, combined with excellent singing throughout, make this a first-class recording of this 18th-century Mass.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



DVD/BLU-RAY

VERDI La forza del destino
Sols incl Harteros & Kaufmann;
Bavarian State Orchestra / Asher Fisch
Sony Classical

A dream team of soloists, though the star is very much Anja Harteros, who as Leonora is 'mesmerising, exuding a sense of noble tragedy' writes reviewer Hugo Shirley.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE

ARNOLD The Complete Conifer Recordings
Sony Classical

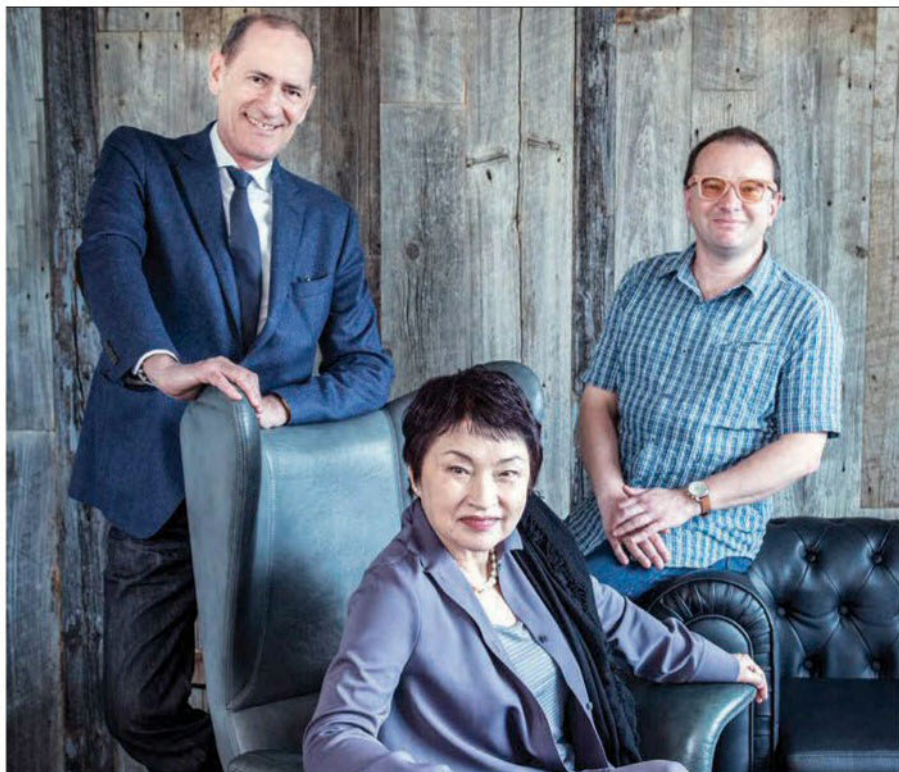
A welcome return to the catalogue for this survey of Arnold's orchestral music, conducted in the main by Vernon Handley.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 85**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD



Kyung Wha Chung with Warner Classics President Alain Lanceron and EVP of A&R Jean-Philippe Rolland

Kyung Wha Chung returns to the recording studio after a 15-year hiatus

Violinist Kyung Wha Chung has returned to the studio after a break of 15 years – and 45 years after the release of her first record.

For her return she's chosen to record the complete Bach Solo Sonatas and Partitas. Details of future releases have not been revealed but are set to include a recital disc with pianist Kevin Kenner and a concerto recording. 'I'm delighted to announce that I am so happy to be returning to the recording studio after many years for a series of exciting artistic projects,' said Chung.

Chung first signed an exclusive recording contract with EMI, the forerunner of today's Warner Classics, in 1988. Among her subsequent releases was the *Gramophone* Award-winning recording of Bartók's Second Violin Concerto and Rhapsodies with Sir Simon Rattle, reviewed by Rob Cowan in June 1994: 'Chung's playing is sinewy, agile and occasionally a mite brittle: phrasing is always judicious...one soon realises that every passage has been carefully thought through – the opening sequence,

for example, which Chung traces as a continuous line of monologue.'

Chung has also recorded for Decca, and with DG won a *Gramophone* Chamber Award for violin sonatas by Strauss and Respighi with Krystian Zimerman. Michael Oliver reviewed this recording in the February 1990 issue, noting that Chung 'has ample richness of colour, but leaves plenty of room for quiet pensiveness and hushed delicacy'.

Further recordings of note include the Sibelius and Tchaikovsky Concertos with André Previn and the LSO for Decca in 1970, and the Beethoven and Bruch's First with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and the LPO, conducted by Klaus Tennstedt for EMI in 1989.

Chung stepped down from performance in 2005, focusing instead on teaching and her family. She returned to the concert platform in 2010, began touring in 2013 and performed in the UK in 2014. Forthcoming performances include opening the Verbier Festival on July 22, and a series of recitals in the UK and Ireland in October, followed by a concert at New York's Carnegie Hall on May 18, 2017.

Digital music revenues overtake physical for the first time

The 2016 Global Music Report by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) has revealed that in 2015 digital music accounted for 45 per cent of global music revenues, with physical products taking a 39 per cent share. Total revenues grew 3.2 per cent to \$15bn (US), leading to the industry's first significant year-on-year growth in nearly 20 years. Streaming, the fastest growing sector, saw a 45.2 per cent increase in revenues in 2015.

Two First Prizes at the 2016 Nielsen Violin Competition

Not one but two violinists have been awarded the First Prize in the 2016 Carl Nielsen International Violin Competition. Ji Yoon Lee from South Korea and the Bulgarian Liya Petrova shared the top award of €11,000 and an opportunity to record with Orchid Classics, with Luke Hsu from the US carrying off the Third Prize of €8000.

Said Nikolaj Znaider, President of the Jury and previous winner of the competition (in 1992): 'We are delighted to award Ji Yoon Lee and Liya Petrova joint First Prize. It was impossible for us to separate these two excellent violinists, equally deserving to win. The jury is convinced that both artists have exciting careers ahead of them.'

The performances at the semi-finals and finals were live-streamed on Danish Radio's website, and are available to watch at dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/klassisk for free.

Lost manuscript by Malcolm Arnold discovered on eBay

The original handwritten manuscript of Sir Malcolm Arnold's Seventh Symphony has been discovered for sale on eBay by Arnold's daughter Katherine.

Written while Arnold was living in Dublin in 1973, the symphony had survived in performance and published form, but it is thought that he gave the manuscript away in lieu of payment to a repairman or plumber. Each of

Meanwhile, the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) has reported that sales of vinyl continue to grow. In the first quarter of 2016 nearly 640,000 vinyl albums were sold in the UK, which represents a 60 per cent increase on the corresponding three-month quarter in 2015. As the BPI states: 'This pattern follows a similar rate of growth of 64 per cent for all of 2015, when LP sales climbed for an eighth successive year to 2.1 million units – a 21-year high. Such a trend continued across 2016 would ensure that LP unit sales smash the milestone of 3 million sales by year-end, and could even exceed the 3.5 million mark – a figure that most likely hasn't been seen since the end of the 1980s.'



Nielsen Prize-winners: Ji Yoon Lee and Liya Petrova

the three movements is dedicated to his children, Katherine, Robert and Edward, which is why Katherine spent so many years searching for the missing manuscript. It has now been loaned to Eton College's manuscript archive and viewings can be arranged by appointment with the school's library.

Daniel Kramer named next Artistic Director of ENO

English National Opera has announced that its next Artistic Director will be the British-American director Daniel Kramer. His relationship with ENO stretches back to 2008 when he directed Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* as part of ENO's young directors initiative. Kramer will commence his role in August 2016 but won't actually programme a season as Artistic Director until 2018.

Of his appointment, Kramer said: 'My intention is to inspire audiences night after night with a thrilling programme of musical diversity, attracting audiences from opera to operetta through to popular music.'

Marie-Nicole Lemieux: the contralto signs record deal with Erato

The French-Canadian contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux has signed an exclusive contract with Erato. The relationship will begin with a recital album of Rossini arias in April next year. Lemieux took the programme into the studio in December, around the time of her performances with the orchestra and chorus of the Opéra National Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon and conductor Enrique Mazzola.

'It's an absolute joy to join the Erato team on this new musical adventure,' said Marie-Nicole Lemieux on joining the label. 'The greatest artists of the past and present have left their mark on the label. Music is essential to the good of humanity and I hope from the bottom of my heart to share my love for this beautiful, deeply human art form that is singing. And who better than Rossini to celebrate with in all his musical splendour and generosity!'

Lemieux came to prominence in 2000 when, aged 24 and in her first competition, she won First Prize and the Lied Prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Belgium. In 2004, *Gramophone* highlighted her as 'One to Watch', coinciding with the release of a disc of Vivaldi's *Stabat mater* and Scarlatti's *Salve regina* on Analekta – a debut disc highly praised by critic Stanley Sadie. A further album for Analekta (Brahms) was followed by a series of discs for Naïve, including a performance of *Orlando* described as 'astonishingly good, full of conviction, passionate, and vocally brilliant', and a French song disc entitled 'Ne me refuse pas' which made it to the final three of the Recital category in the 2011 Awards.



Marie-Nicole Lemieux: newly signed Erato artist

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PODCASTS

Pianists Charles Owen and Katya Apekisheva (pictured) have recently recorded a disc of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* for Quartz. James Jolly talks to them about the challenges of performing these formidable four-hand transcriptions.



HALL OF FAME

This is the fifth year that we have been including the greatest classical artists, producers and record-label executives (as voted for by our readers) in the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame, and you can discover which 10 artists will be joining the illustrious group this year by turning to page 18. On *Gramophone's* website you can explore the Hall of Fame in its entirety, with features, videos, reviews and interviews from the *Gramophone* archive. It is a wonderful resource for anyone looking to explore classical music on record. Among the many highlights are Alan Blyth's interviews with Sir John Barbiroli (from 1969) and Leonard Bernstein (from 1970).

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ERIK SATIE

Eccentric, revolutionary, utterly unique

The Frenchman drew on ancient chant, music hall and jazz in music that reflected the sound of Paris during La Belle Époque and the Roaring Twenties yet that remained distinctly his own. Exactly 150 years after the composer's birth, Peter Quantrill explores Satie's trailblazing genius

Could there be more to Satie than music for piano students and TV commercials? Just how seriously should we take Satie? Very seriously, according to

Noriko Ogawa. 'His pieces are like charcoal sketches for the oils that came afterwards,' says the pianist, who has embarked on recording the complete piano music for BIS, a century and a half after Satie's birth in Honfleur. 'I can hear so clearly, this is Messiaen, and here is Poulenc, and Ravel must have heard this. I now take him as a visionary. He was not successful in his lifetime, but he left so many ideas which came true.'

With his career, as with his works themselves, the concept of development has no meaning. When Satie owned hardly more than a piano and the clothes he stood up in, he wrote the sequence of three *Gymnopédies* (begun in 1888) and seven *Gnossiennes* for which he is still best known today, as well as two religiously themed theatrical scores which have been almost completely forgotten. Once earning a little money as a cabaret artist, he composed *Le Piccadilly* and arranged songs such as 'Je te veux'. Having been 'rediscovered' by Ravel in 1911 and become an ornament of the fashionable salons, he wrote the descriptively textured piano music to be relished first and foremost by the performer. Taken up by Parisian ballet companies late in life, he returned to music for the stage with *Parade* (1917), and *Mercure* and *Relâche* (both 1924).

Where did Satie's music come from? The answer is not a straightforward list of people and power figures. Ancient Greek modes and Gregorian chant chart the impassive flow of the four *Ogives* (published in 1889) and much of the early piano music leading up to and through 1893, when he briefly submitted himself as a disciple of Joséphin Péladan, the art critic, author and occultist who founded the Mystic Order of the Rose+Croix. In her new study *Erik Satie: A Parisian Composer And His World*, Caroline Potter shows how the barrel-organ tunes played on Montmartre's streets were absorbed within the jerky,



The enigmatic Satie, by Rusiñol (1861-1931)

'Satie was the only musician who had eyes' - Man Ray, artist

quasi-mechanical repetition of many works from the *Jack in the Box* pantomime (1899) through the piano suite *Descriptions automatiques* (1913) to the absurdist humour of *Relâche* for the Ballets Suédois.

By the time of his trio of late ballets, Satie had incorporated the worlds of music hall and jazz within an idiom that did not so much develop as expand to take in Dada, surrealism and the wild gale of ideas blowing through Paris, capital of the artistic world at the time. Much of his music proceeds at walking pace, just as he did. Putting one foot in front of the other was as important for him as it had been for Wordsworth.

These disparate influences share related qualities. They are anonymous, popular and universal. Satie learnt more from the music of churches, streets and clubs than from eight years of reluctant and unsuccessful study at the Paris Conservatoire. With the signal exception of Claude Debussy, the artists who meant most to Satie were non-musicians. Installed as a café pianist at the Chat Noir in Montmartre in the early 1890s, Satie knocked about with a fellow

Honfleur native, the artist Alphonse Allais, who had already produced the canvases that would assure his place in history such as *Apoplectic Cardinals Harvesting Tomatoes on the Shore of the Red Sea (Study of the Aurora Borealis)*. Satie directed that the action and design of *Le fils des étoiles* (1891) – an austere ritual-entertainment cooked up between himself and Péladan – should be 'white and immobile', as if with Allais's anaemic young girls on their way to first communion in mind. And there is no more perfect example of his ear translating that *mise-en-scène* into harmony, his own harmony, than the solo piano piece *Fête donnée par des chevaliers normands en l'honneur d'une jeune demoiselle* (1892).

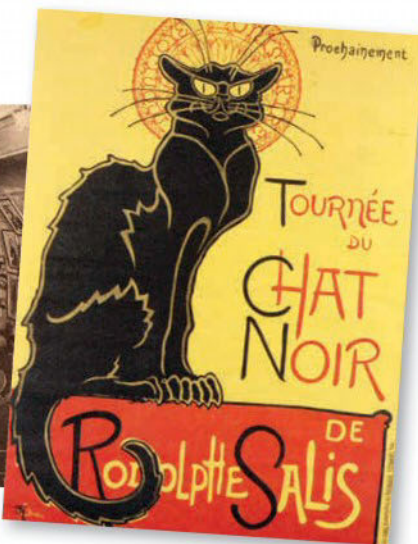
Another Chat Noir acquaintance was Caran d'Ache, the pencil man. And after first meeting in 1910, Satie and the sculptor Brancusi were firm friends. Then there were the players and clowns in the circus of ideas that was Paris in the 1910s and '20s: among them Cocteau, Diaghilev, Gide, Picasso, and Man Ray, who said that 'Satie was the only musician who had eyes'. The American-born artist was ever grateful to Satie for helping him after he had staged his first show in Paris in 1921. Finding him



'The Velvet Gentleman': Satie used part of a small inheritance in 1895 to buy seven identical suits



By 1890, Satie was a regular pianist at artists' haunt the Chat Noir



cold, anxious and lonely in his gallery, fresh off the boat from the US, Satie took him to a café and gave him a hot toddy. On the way there they passed an ironmongers', where Man Ray picked up a flat iron, glued tacks to the smooth surface and added it to the exhibition: 'This was my first Dada object in France.'

Satie's legacy to posterity, then, extends way beyond music. Gilbert and George have never spoken of the composer, but the carefully constructed indivisibility of their work and their personae is unimaginable without Satie's example. To be seen suited and booted, day in, day out, on the streets of a down-at-heel suburb where they have made their home, the knowing and ostensibly heedless object of a cult following, while they make popular art from simple materials, art of apparent parody and

proclaimed sincerity, art informed by strong anti-elitist, anti-Establishment beliefs...Is that Gilbert and George in Spitalfields yesterday, or Satie in Arcueil a century ago? Obviously, both.

'Satie was one of the first musicians to have an image that he created,' notes Alistair McGowan. The actor and impressionist has nurtured a fascination with Satie since encountering the *Gymnopédies* in childhood, as so many of us do, but has taken it further, with documentaries on the composer and now a live show touring the UK in 2016. 'Satie was a man who sold himself very well,' he

continues. 'Dare one say, like Lady Gaga. He also reminds me of Stewart Lee. What Stewart is doing in his comedy, which Satie did in his music, is to say, "This is what we've done so far. I'm going to do something different. I want you to come on a journey with me and if you don't, I really don't care." They both do something different which becomes something imitable itself, in terms of deconstructing things and making deconstruction funny.'

Medievalist, Dadaist, neo-realist, neo-classicist, surrealist: these labels were all applied to Satie at the time, and the members of their relatively short- or long-lived movements all claimed the composer as a member of their brotherhood. The

SATIE ON THE STAGE

There is a sad irony to the fact that the most popular ballet by Satie today is not one of his own works for the medium but *Monotones*, the piece of moon-walk Classicism created by Frederick Ashton for the Royal Ballet in 1965 from the ubiquitous *Gymnopédies*, played in well-meaning orchestrations by Debussy and Roland-Manuel that fill out Satie's silences with harp *glissandi* and from his chaste sequences conjure mock-Medieval pretty pictures.

Even so, it was Debussy who alone recognised the original qualities of *Uspud* when Satie played its first version in public, and took heed of Satie's injunction when writing *Pelléas*: 'There is no need for the orchestra to pull faces when a character comes on stage. Take a look. Do the trees or the scenery grimace?'

So it is that the three late ballets do not describe stories or scenarios. The mirrored form and melodies of *Parade* (commissioned by Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes and premiered in 1917) create a Cubist musical form which succinctly responds to the scenario devised by Cocteau in which a troupe of performers tries and fails to attract an audience. Picasso's cardboard costumes were a far more attentive response to the score than Cocteau's insistence on the inclusion of non-musical instruments (siren, typewriter and so on) for which *Parade* became infamous, and so when Satie broke with Cocteau he persevered with Picasso and the choreographer Massine to create *Mercury*.

The invented genre-subtitle of 'Poses plastiques' indicates that, in *Mercury*, the score plays servant to the design: 'One should first see the characters dance,' said Satie at the time, 'before writing the music that should illustrate their movements.'



Relâche, with a set by painter Francis Picabia comprising 370 car headlights

He took great care over tiny sequences of scales and circular repetitions, simplifying rhythm and enriching harmony as he watched rehearsals. 'It looks like nothing,' he said on delivering the score, 'but a great deal of work has gone into this little lot.'

At the 1924 premiere, friends, public and critics alike were foxed by a work that conformed to the conventions of neither ballet nor music hall, though Diaghilev was silently green with envy. The reception was even worse for *Relâche* six months later, doubtless inflamed by onstage placards that read 'If you don't like what you see then f**k off!' By now mortally ill, the composer was dismayed, not least by the amateurish scandal-mongering of the Ballets Suédois; his strangest music is reserved for the 10-minute cinematic interlude, precisely cut to accompany images of slow-motion running, posing by a cannon – a look at everyday life in reverse. Like much else he did, said and wrote, it annoys, charms and intrigues in equal measure.

man himself rejected them all, one by one. Since then, he has become the first minimalist, and the first ambient musician (according to Brian Eno). 'Listen to film composers such as Alexandre Desplat,' says McGowan. 'There's very little going on in the right hand, slow chords in the left – you can hear Satie and it's a hundred years later.' For Debussy, Satie was 'the precursor', and the opening of *Pelléas et Mélisande* is unmistakably Satiean; perhaps for that reason, Satie turned in another direction. Time and again, he made a toy and left the other children to play with it. He would wander off to invent something else.

Like most of us, Ogawa knew Satie from the *Gymnopédies*, *Gnossiennes*, 'Je te veux' and not much else. 'The penny dropped for me when I started learning the religious pieces. All these strange chord progressions! They are incredibly original. They don't lie under the fingers very well. They look simple, except that there are so many accidentals – beautiful but unpredictable.'

Ogawa's insight gets to the heart of why some of us who like Satie's music do so: because of the sounds it makes. They are plain on the page, peculiar to the ear, and all the more satisfying for being continually unguessable. Satie has attracted many for what he represents: the penniless artist, the left-wing contrarian, reliably kicking against the pricks. And it's understandable, in a (European and North American) culture that lacks a widespread grammar for musical appreciation, where many

'It's like when a painter avoids
fine colours and paints only
lines...He expresses very
exact ideas' – Alexei Lubimov, pianist

find it hard or embarrassing to say how and why they like what they hear, that those outside and even suspicious of the world of art music have been drawn to Satie and found a kindred spirit, as John Cage did half a century after the composer's death. Contamine de Latour, the poet who collaborated with Satie on the early 'ballet chrétien' *Uspud*, remarked that Satie was like a man who had learnt only 13 letters of the alphabet but was determined to make a literature from them. Perhaps in tacit acknowledgment of that deficit, Satie studied for seven years with Roussel and d'Indy, obtaining a treasured Diploma in 1908.

The connections between Cage and Satie multiply. The idea of instrumental music as abstract was foreign. Both men wrote for the stage throughout their careers, not so much for singers as dancers. Yet they communicated with words all the time, through text rather than song, most often away from the business of music. Cage expanded on mycology and ice fishing. Among Satie's writings are catechistic brochures for the Église Métropolitaine d'Art de Jésus Conducteur, a one-man sect which he founded in 1893 once he had broken with 'Sâr Péladan'. *Le piège de Méduse* of 1913 is a lyric comedy with incidental music. *Memoirs of an Annesiac* and *A Mammal's Notebook* take wry stock of himself, his critics and enemies (mostly former friends).

From 1909, Satie wrote snippets and jottings for a local newspaper, *L'avenir d'Arcueil-Cachan*. 'Do not throw away your old jewels any more,' runs one. 'Sell them for a high price. With the product of this fruitful transaction, coolly take a share – the lion's share – in the new Aqueduct Savings Society.' And more seriously, 'M Satie's solfège lessons take place every Sunday morning at 9am' – just when all his prospective students should be at Mass. 'They're almost like bits of stand-up routines,'

CHORAL AND ORGAN MUSIC ON DELPHIAN



DCD34146



In Memoriam

The Choir of King's College London / Gareth Wilson

The choir which David Trendell directed for twenty-two years pays tribute in a collection of specially chosen pieces by David's colleagues, friends and former students, interspersed with the Renaissance polyphony which was Trendell's area of scholarly expertise. His deep love for the Song of Songs has inspired many of the inclusions, and its nature imagery threads through the disc, adding a suggestion of renewal and rebirth to the memorial tone of works written in the months after his untimely death.

'a splendid collection that stands as a celebration of David's life as much as a memorial'

— Gramophone, May 2016, EDITOR'S CHOICE



DCD34162

Elgar: Organ Works

Benjamin Nicholas

The first recording of Merton's new Dobson organ ('an instrument of real musical worth' – *Gramophone*, July 2014) was designed to demonstrate the instrument's considerable versatility. But behind the contemporary sophistication of its construction and design, this is essentially an English Romantic organ with a big, warm-hearted personality, securely grounded in the aesthetic traditions of the late nineteenth century, and this second recording highlights those qualities. Benjamin Nicholas couples Elgar's two original major works for the organ with three transcriptions – including a first outing on CD for the superb arrangement of the Prelude to *The Kingdom* made by Herbert Brewer, Elgar's contemporary and the long-serving organist of Gloucester Cathedral.

'dramatic playing ... convincing orchestral sweep in the Sonata ...'

— Choir & Organ, March/April 2016



DCD34143

The Organ of Rochdale Town Hall:

Overture Transcriptions Vol II

Timothy Byram-Wigfield

At its high point, the British town hall organ tradition represented something entirely new and extraordinary, in social, mechanical, aesthetic and commercial terms; and the transcriptions made for these colossal instruments demonstrate remarkable syntheses of ingenuity, skill and ambition on the part of both organ-builders and musical arrangers. Rochdale's extravagantly Gothic town hall is one of the most impressive examples of Victorian and Edwardian civic pride, and Timothy Byram-Wigfield has chosen its fine J.J. Binns organ as the vehicle for his second disc of orchestral overture transcriptions, following his celebrated 2004 volume recorded on the organ of the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow.

'Byram-Wigfield takes it all in his unflappable stride, the opening carefully layered, the control scrupulous throughout'

— BBC Music Magazine, April 2016

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Above: a self-caricature; the 'bourgeois functionary'. Below: as depicted by Cocteau; a four-bar song dedicated to painter Suzanne Valadon, Satie's only known lover

remarks McGowan. 'They're surreal, Milligan-esque. The aim of my show is to reveal the brilliance of the man's comedy-writing. "My servant comes and takes my temperature every hour. Then he gives me a new one." That's a great line.'

Ogawa's first disc mostly comprises the 'texted music', composed in the 1910s after Ravel and Debussy competed to assure the public they understood Satie best and first. A Chabrier parody in Satie's *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois* (1913) includes the line 'I want a solid mahogany hat!' above the stave. The end of *Embryons desséchés*, written in the same year, laughs openly at the bang-bang coda to Beethoven's Eighth Symphony. It's impossible to take seriously but, as the pianist Alexei Lubimov notes, 'Like Stravinsky, he was a very serious composer of witty music.' Having recorded both *Le fils d'étoiles* and *Relâche* (arranged for two pianos by Milhaud, Satie's friend and protégé), Lubimov admires him in the round: 'I don't think his harmonic or melodic ideas are especially remarkable compared with his contemporaries. He was negative to many movements – Impressionism, German music and so on. And from this refusal, he made his own musical world, limited to what seemed the most necessary things, for his purposes, not for the rest of the population.'

'It's like when a painter avoids fine colours and transitions and paints only lines, like Malevich. Satie expresses very exact ideas. He avoids everything unnecessary in order to be a prophet. His way was to connect his compositions with objects and processes, everyday things. His later music is very concrete, very picturesque, and full of description.'

For both pianists, the descriptive jokes in a piano cycle such as the *Sports et divertissements* (1914) – in which Satie's intricately calligraphed texts and music combine with drawings by French artist Charles Martin – ring true and sincere. Another case in point is the *Sonatine bureaucratique* (1917), where Satie explodes a Clementi sonata over the tale of a civil servant at his desk. The tale itself should remain silent, and Ogawa respects his wishes – 'I don't want to be haunted by

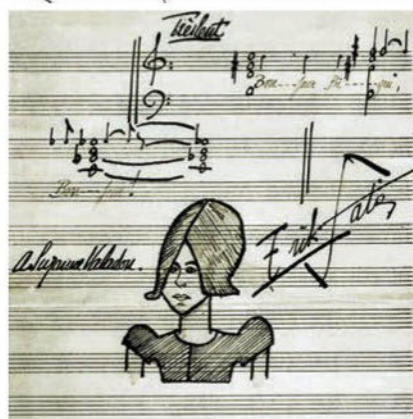
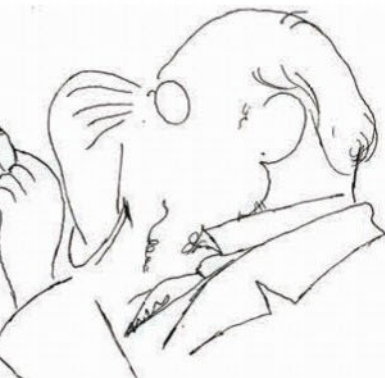
him!' – but admits that 'most of his music has so many sides that it needs this kind of extra treatment, alongside the music itself'. The sonata itself is a subtle play of illusion in which Clementi and Satie dance hand in hand; three years later, Stravinsky did the same with Pergolesi in *Pulcinella*, at which point Satie moved on again.

Despite living a hand-to-mouth existence in poverty, Satie was fastidious about everything that mattered to him: his calligraphy, his dress, his music. He could take half an hour writing the address on a postcard to decline an invitation to dinner. During the early 1890s in Montmartre, he played the dandy, using a small inheritance to buy seven identical corduroy suits and earning himself the 'Velvet Gentleman' nickname. In 1898, to save money, he moved to the cheaper suburb of Arcueil, 10km outside the city centre, where he was to adopt his final appearance as a bourgeois functionary, complete with bowler hat, wing collar and umbrella. He spent most of his income on food, drink and friends. It was the drink that did for him – he met a pitiful end in July 1926 from pneumonia and cirrhosis in a nursing home while all his friends were either estranged from him or on holiday – but he was no playboy. Satie was outraged by the assassination of Socialist Party founder Jean Jaurès, promptly joined the party and then the French Communists.

Satie composed slowly and took his craft seriously. Even the smallest dances and preludes are built from units of one or two bars, often in mirror construction and using inverted harmony to create the puzzling simultaneous sensation that you know how it goes but can't remember where.

Yet it's also amenable to arrangement, as he often proved from necessity, and others from Debussy to Birtwistle have followed in his path with greater or lesser success. His music is like a balloon, to be blown up and deflated according to the space and time available.

Both Lubimov and Ogawa have chosen to



perform on Erard instruments of Satie's time. The composer himself had two pianos in his single-room flat in Arcueil, but as his brother Conrad discovered when he prised open the front door after Satie's death, one was balanced on top of the other. The instrument above was like a haunted postbox, stuffed with unread letters. 'If you look into a modern piano,' says Ogawa, 'you see bass strings running across the body of the piano, running left to right. In this Erard they don't do that – the lower strings run parallel to the others, so the lower register sounds different, more bell-like. The bass note rings quite independently, unaffected by the notes above. It isn't strong, it doesn't gong, it sings on its own, and stays there for a long time.'

And the touch is much lighter. This must have been the sound that Satie knew and his creative ideas must have come from this kind of instrument. I always think of pianos as male, but this one is like an elegant lady!

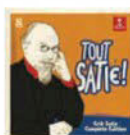
Where Lubimov and Ogawa also agree is in the open-ended nature of Satie's music and the opportunities it offers to imaginative musicians. 'Performances used to be casual and easy-going because the notes look simple on the page,' observes Ogawa. 'Satie left us to play with it, and I think that's what he wanted us to do. He throws questions at us, and we have to come up with answers. In that respect he gives an old and a new freedom to performers.' Says Lubimov: 'We tend to perform music in a finished way, as if it is complete unto itself. This is right for Stravinsky, but Satie is more open to possibilities. In that sense he reminds me of Morton Feldman. And improvisers find in Satie much fertile ground for their own invention.'

His music is like a balloon, to
be blown up and deflated
according to the space
and time available

Thus Satie's legacy is still up for debate. When the City Council of Arcueil proposed to spend 50,000 euros this year on events based around Satie's 150th anniversary, it drew an affronted response from a *Front National* councillor. 'Hypocrite – coward – mediocre,' he protested of Satie. It would be an outrage, according to his comments reported by *Le Parisien*, that 'public money be used to honour an alcoholic member of the Communist Party'. Another councillor retorted that 'the only tourists who come to Arcueil come for Satie'. A Gallic shrug is not an option. Satie's music demands you take an attitude, just as he did. ⑥

CELEBRATING SATIE ON CD AND DVD

Five recordings exploring Satie's unique take on music



'Tout Satie!'
Sols incl Anne
Queffelec pf
Mady Mesplé sop
Erato (2/16)

The full picture, in French recordings of various vintages.



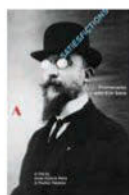
Early Piano Music
Reinbert de Leeuw pf
Decca ② (9/81)
Wonderfully still, luminously voiced

accounts of the Gymnopédies and Rosicrucian piano pieces.



Vexations
Jeroen van Veen pf
Brilliant Classics (digital only)
For the insomniac in your life: the only 'complete'

recording of Satie's enigmatic 'Pages mystiques'.



'Satiefictions'
Documentary film by Anne-Kathrin Peitz and Youlian Tabakov
Accentus (11/15)

An authentically playful account of the composer and his social/musical circles.



Erik Satie, Vol 1
Noriko Ogawa pf
BIS (released July)

On this, the first of a planned five-CD series recorded on the same 1890 Erard piano, Ogawa gives a historically informed perspective on the pieces of the 1910s.

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GLYNDEBOURNE

**DIE
ENTFÜHRUNG
AUS DEM
SERAIL**
MOZART
Glyndebourne
DVD | BLU-RAY



Director David McVicar's original-period vision for this Mozartian gem allows its genius to speak for itself, offering a 'mesmerising, sensitive ... outstanding' portrayal of Enlightenment-era fascination with the East that is both 'exquisitely acted and sung', featuring a Konstanze and a Belmonte sung with 'finesse and bravura' and a 'sensationally voiced' Osmin (The Guardian ★★★★★). Robin Ticciati leads the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.



POLIUTO
DONIZETTI
Glyndebourne
DVD | BLU-RAY

Glyndebourne has brought to light a long-overlooked winner in Donizetti's *Poliuto*, delivering 'a superb musical performance' (The Telegraph) offering 'luculent accounts of the principal roles and an incandescent London Philharmonic Orchestra, under Enrique Mazzola' (New York Times).



SAUL
HANDEL
Glyndebourne
DVD | BLU-RAY

Glyndebourne's *Saul* stole the summer and had critics raving. The Guardian (★★★★) applauded 'virtuoso stagecraft' from director Barrie Kosky in his debut production there, calling the show 'a theatrical and musical feast of energetic choruses, surreal choreography and gorgeous singing'.

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SUMMONING THE SPIRIT OF *Alessandro Stradella*

Nepi is a small town in the Lazio hills. Its mineral-rich spring water has been famous since Etruscan times, and near the ruins of a castle owned by Lucrezia Borgia is a waterfall painted by Turner – although I suspect few tourists have been here since: there is neither a train station nor a hotel, and little for the visitor to do. However, every September, Baroque musicians, musicologists and audiences from across Europe gather here for masterclasses, lectures and recording sessions that celebrate the town's most illustrious son, the composer Alessandro Stradella (1639–82). The festival was founded three years ago by Andrea de Carlo, a viola da gamba player whose experiences of playing with musicians such as Rinaldo Alessandrini led to his establishing Ensemble Mare Nostrum, with which he explores the untapped treasure-trove of 17th-century Roman music. He chuckles when he tells me that he fell into conducting accidentally when he turned up to play gamba in a masterclass on Stradella's serenata *La forza delle Stelle*: 'I arrived and there was no director! It became obvious it was going to just be an impossible mess, so I volunteered to study the score overnight and the next day I made my debut as a conductor – and by a happy coincidence this was also how I first discovered Stradella's music.'

It was for sentimental reasons that de Carlo chose *La forza delle Stelle* to initiate the Stradella Project – a recording series for Outhere's Italian division Arcana produced each year during the festival (the event is hosted by the Nepi community, and the artists are put up in the local monastery). During my visit the festival revolves around Ensemble Mare Nostrum's concert in the town's cathedral of the oratorio *Santa Editta: vergine e monarca, regina d'Inghilterra*; although scored for only seven voices and basso continuo, there are moments when its musical sensuality outweighs any outward conformity to the piety of the vernacular libretto by Duke Lelio Orsini. It presents an abstract argument over the soul of the saintly English queen Edith.

Through his festival and recording project, Andrea de Carlo is raising the profile of this pioneering Italian composer, says David Vickers



Andrea de Carlo made his conducting debut with Stradella's *La forza delle Stelle*

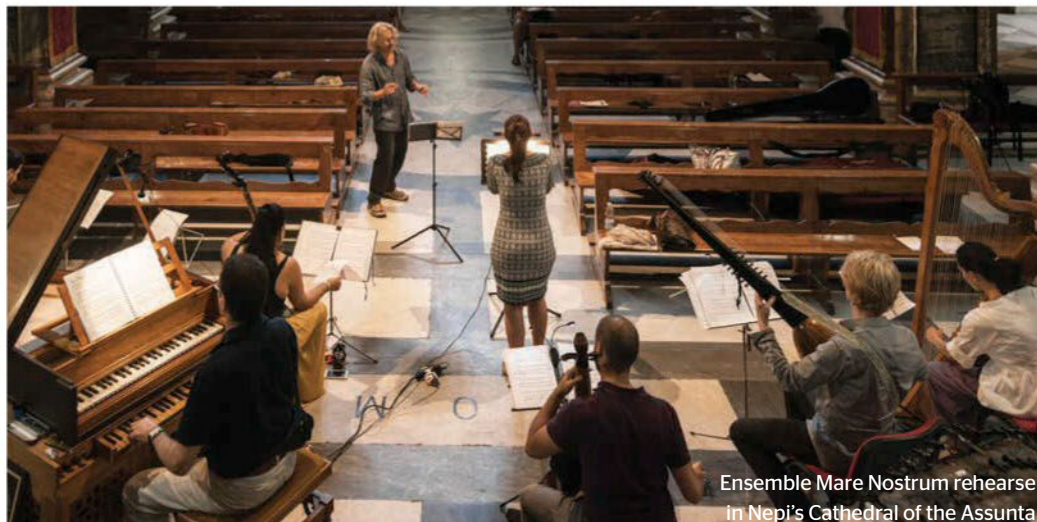
'Stradella is like the Charlie Parker of 17th-century Italy – he's always looking for the excitement in the up-beat' – Andrea de Carlo

Perhaps the eponymous Edith is supposed to be the wife of the comparably pious Edward the Confessor, but the Roman Catholic idea that suffering and the renunciation of sensuality will result in celestial bliss is clearly a transferable moral.

Mythical English queens of saintly virtue are far away as I attend a final rehearsal in advance of the concert. Stradella's great-uncle was the Bishop of the Etruscan towns of Sutra and Nepi; the baptismal font bears the noble family's coat-of-arms, and a house in the small adjacent piazza bears a plaque that this was once the composer's abode (this fact has been disputed, but the house certainly belonged to the Stradella family). The Stradellas had come to Nepi from Tuscany, and during the composer's childhood the family moved to Vignola, near Modena. After his father's death, Stradella's mother relocated her family to Rome, and it was here that the young man became a professional musician. His first documented commission in 1667 led to many more from Rome's prestigious patrons of the fine arts. Disrepute and sordid

scandals forced Stradella to flee Rome, Venice and Turin (where he survived an assassination attempt), and eventually led to his being stabbed to death by an unknown assailant on a dark Genoa street. Nevertheless, his pioneering concerto grosso instrumentation and trio sonata movements directly influenced the young Corelli, dramatic oratorios such as *San Giovanni Battista* (Rome, 1675) and *La Susanna* (Modena, 1681) must have informed the development of Scarlatti, and he was certainly remembered in Rome by some patrons of Handel – who later on in London borrowed ideas copiously from Stradella's serenata *Qual prodigio è ch'io miri?* when composing *Israel in Egypt* (1739).

The next morning, Arcana engineer Fabio Framba and Ensemble Mare Nostrum relocate upstairs to behind the altar and set up in the middle of the choir stalls. This halves the height and length of the space around the musicians, creating



Ensemble Mare Nostrum rehearse in Nepi's Cathedral of the Assunta

De Carlo's comparison makes immediate sense – both were flawed figures who survived brutal assassination attempts, yet their deaths were the subjects of controversy. They were also, I point out, both masters of layered meanings and chiaroscuro techniques in their work. 'Absolutely,' de Carlo agrees. 'Both were very complicated yet immediate artists, and it's not a coincidence that their use of sacred themes in their art is infiltrated by the erotic and profane. Caravaggio was painting Madonnas using models who were actually

a more prudent environment for the recording sessions that is less reverberant than the nave, and further away from the street noise. Instead of the ensemble's concert disposition in a long row, the international team of seven continuo players are now assembled in a semicircle facing each other, which improves sight-lines and helps the unity of this contrapuntal and rhythmically buoyant music. Sergio Foresti is recording the fiendishly tricky bass aria sections for his character Senso. The zealous de Carlo takes a little while to become satisfied with the band's sense of pulse and rhythm; tightening up the pacing lightens and characterises the players' articulation, which helps Foresti to point his words with greater finesse.

Post-session, de Carlo is keen to express his enthusiasm for Stradella: 'I started out as a jazz bass player in my youth, and it turns out that Stradella is exactly like the centre of all my different paths until now because I think he's like the Charlie Parker of 17th-century

Italy. I think a lot of the time classical musicians feel the music in down-beats, but a jazz musician could never do just that – so the drummer's cymbals are more important to the feel of the music than just the down-beats on the bass drum. And in Stradella there's a similar lightness, direction and swing to the music – he's always looking for the excitement in the up-beat.'

I suggest that Stradella is probably the supreme composer in 17th-century Rome of the neglected generations between Carissimi and Corelli. 'Yes – the music of Rome in the mid-17th century is a hidden treasure. Venice has had her moment of musical rediscovery, and so to an extent has Naples. Maybe next it should be Rome's – there is such a richness and quality that we need to explore. Pasquini, for instance, is a marvellous composer, but we have barely skimmed the surface.' So why has de Carlo picked out Stradella for such special attention? 'In many ways his myriad formative experiences and contrapuntal learning were elements that came alive when he absorbed all the culture of Rome – a very special place that had artistic academics, new theatres and a lot of life! And with composers like Marazzoli, Mazzochi, Rossi and Carissimi, the place was full of great music that was already really jazzy because of their understanding of language. And of course this was also the Rome where Bernini and Caravaggio had been working. I want to prove that anyone who loves Caravaggio can also love Stradella.'

'As with Caravaggio's altarpieces, there are elements in Stradella's oratorios that are extremely sensual' – Andrea de Carlo

prostitutes, and yet you look at the painting and feel like you're close to godliness. And this connection between the high things of heaven and the low things of the everyday world is exactly the same in Stradella. His sacred oratorios are like boxes, and inside them he has created things that happen on political, social, erotic and sensual levels. So the literal religious dimension can be subverted. As in Caravaggio's altarpieces, there are things in Stradella's oratorios that are extremely sensual.'

Santa Editta is the first Stradella Project volume to have benefited from a considerable amount of hands-on assistance from Susan Orlando, the mastermind behind Naïve's Vivaldi Edition. Although much of Stradella's music has not yet been published in proper critical editions, I ask de Carlo if recording a complete *opera omnia* is a tempting proposition. 'This is definitely something I'd like to see happen. Next year we are going to record *Santa Pelagia*, which will mean we've recorded three of his least-

known oratorios, but then I want to move on – there are many wonderful Stradella operas that aren't known very well, and I've been doing a lot of work on *La Doriclea*. For a long time we thought it was lost, but a manuscript score recently found sitting in an organists' stool might be Stradella's setting! So I want to diversify, but I know I cannot do it by myself. There's too much unpublished music and every project requires a lot of time and scholarship. So we have the idea to open our Stradella Project out to other ensembles. I'd love to make it similar to the Vivaldi Edition, where we could have several ensembles, with different singers and directors, and these different points of view would also make it more interesting for the public.'

But what is de Carlo's point of view? 'I want to show that Stradella is extremely complex but that at the same time he is also extremely easy – because if you play him in the right way, the music is immediately touching. It's a little bit like Bach – everyone knows that there's a lot of complex counterpoint, but when everybody just listens to Bach the musical message arrives regardless of whether they understand the technical elements or not. My goal with the Stradella Project is to make his music understandable for everyone, so that anyone can listen to it. I want to show that he is jazzy and sensual, complicated and risky. My background in jazz and playing viola da gamba in polyphonic music is a good path to Stradella – but not the only one!' **G**
The Stradella recording on Arcana will be reviewed in the next issue

This is the fifth year that Gramophone has invited readers to vote for the people who have most shaped the classical music recording industry. In the following pages you can discover the 10 names we've welcomed into our Hall of Fame for 2016, who are joining an already illustrious list of members

GRAMOPHONE HALL OF FAME



DAME EMMA KIRKBY

(b1949) Soprano

The quintessential voice of the early music revival for many, Dame Emma has enchanted several generations of music lovers in a repertoire ranging from early music to the mid-19th century.

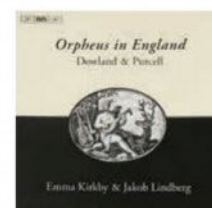
JAKOB LINDBERG *Lutenist*

I have had the great privilege to share the stage with Emma Kirkby on many occasions over the past 15 years. It is wonderful how her clear, rich and yet intimate voice blends so well with the lute. In a duo recital, this means that the audience does not need to readjust when lute solos follow

the songs, and the volume of the lute ensures that every nuance in her masterful approach to diction is always audible. I do hope that more singers continue to follow her lead and resist striving for loudness and a chest voice laden with vibrato, when clarity and diction is what is required in this repertoire.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Emma Kirkby
'Orpheus in England'
Jakob Lindberg *lute*
BIS (5/11)



PHOTOGRAPHY: TERRY LOTT/DECCA, HANNA SUSHI/ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC, KLAUS RUDOLPH/DG

TREVOR PINNOCK

(b1946) Harpsichordist and conductor

The harpsichordist and conductor is one of the major figures in the British period-instrument revival. Today he is hailed for his pioneering zest, something that remains undimmed.

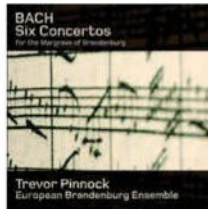
RACHEL PODGER Violinist

During my time with The English Concert I was amazed by how easy it was for Trevor to see the big picture of a piece – his pacing of tempo relationships and contrast of character between movements in a work is stunning. This assurance inspired within me a confidence to look beyond the notes on the page. With Trevor I played my first *Four Seasons*, *Brandenburgs*, and other Vivaldi concertos like the *Grosso Mogul* in large festivals and halls in the Far East. Trevor is a kind man, strong in his convictions, with a twinkle in his eye and a wonderful zest for life.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Trevor Pinnock

Bach: Brandenburg Concertos
European Brandenburg Ensemble
Avie (3/08)



GRIGORY SOKOLOV

(b1950) Pianist

Born in St Petersburg, Sokolov shot to fame when he won the 1966 International Tchaikovsky Competition. Notoriously mercurial about giving concerts and even more so when it comes to making recordings, Sokolov enjoyed a renaissance of interest and acclaim with DG's best-selling issue of a 2008 Salzburg Festival recital. The recording was praised for its integrity in these pages by Gramophone reviewer Harriet Smith, who singled out his Mozart for being 'treasurable' and described his encore of a Bach chorale prelude as 'all the more moving for its apparent simplicity'. Overall, she wrote, 'it's an overused word, but he is inimitable'.

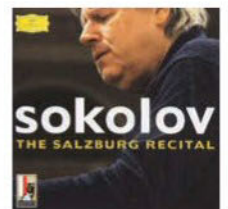
DANIIL TRIFONOV Pianist

Grigory Sokolov is a musical figure of intense magnitude, and one whose concerts are always awaited with great anticipation. Attending his performances, one may have the sensation of the sound possessing a nearly physical essence; it fills the entire concert hall with rare energy and lives in its own time sphere. Sokolov is a great example for young pianists of how much one can seek and find in a piece of music, and in so doing, elevate the listener above the mundane with it.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Grigory Sokolov

'The Salzburg Recital 2008'
DG (2/15)



4
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GUNDULA JANOWITZ

(b1937) Soprano

Discovered by Herbert von Karajan, the Berlin-born Janowitz became one of his favourite sopranos and recorded a vast amount of the lyric repertoire. Embracing music from Monteverdi to Hindemith, Janowitz possessed a pure, creamy soprano voice which might have been made for Mozart and Strauss.

BRIGITTE FASSBAENDER Mezzo-soprano

Gundula Janowitz possesses one of those voices where you have only to hear a couple of notes and you immediately know who it is. Her elegant timbre and unmistakably instrumental way of forming the phrases is unique. An opera, concert and song recitalist with a wide repertoire, she was unforgettable in Mozart roles such as Donna Anna and Fiordiligi, or as a matchlessly witty Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, a wonderfully introverted Fidelio-Leonore and a funny, cryptic Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, just to mention a few of the roles she breathed life into. In concert, she was a perpetual inquirer, always immersed in the task at hand, which she would fulfil with the greatest dedication and discipline. The clarity and spirituality of her voice predestined her for the studio and she has left us a legacy of wonderful recordings. Though never satisfied herself, she can look back and relish the abundance she has contributed to the world of singing.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Gundula Janowitz

R Strauss: Four Last Songs
BPO / Karajan
DG (12/74)



EUGENE ORMANDY

(1899-1985) Conductor

Born and trained in Hungary, Ormandy is famed for his long tenure at the helm of the Philadelphia Orchestra where he created a sound and style that is still discernible in the ensemble today, 21 years after his death.

VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY Pianist and conductor

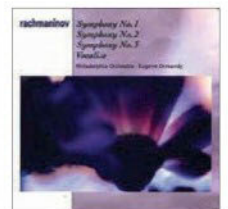
I played a lot of repertoire with him. At one point he said he'd like to record with me, so I asked Decca if they would let me do it and we recorded Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, in Philadelphia for RCA. After the first movement we went into the studio to listen. 'As far as I'm concerned, it's okay,' he said. And my wife said, 'There is a pianist here as well!' He looked at her questioningly. We repeated it anyway, but whenever we saw him again, he'd always look at my wife and, smiling, say 'You, critic!' He was very friendly.

He was very good, very transparent – he hardly had to say anything. He conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra for more than 40 years – it was very harmonious, the musicians respected him very much and played very well for him. It was always a great pleasure to perform with Eugene Ormandy.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Eugene Ormandy

Rachmaninov: Symphonies
Philadelphia Orchestra
Sony Classical (8/72)



ANNE SOFIE VON OTTER

(b1955) Mezzo-soprano

The Swedish mezzo-soprano has a vast repertoire, in countless languages, which she approaches with a professionalism and style that have kept her at the peak of her profession for many years. A consummate artist, she appears to move effortlessly between opera, song and choral music.

SIR JOHN ELIOT GARDINER Conductor

The outstanding mezzo of her generation, Anne Sofie von Otter has always shown extraordinary flexibility in terms both of her musical sympathies and stylistic awareness. The projects we did together in concert and on record



during the 1980s and '90s ranged from Monteverdi, through Handel and Bach, to Mozart, Beethoven and Berlioz. They extended to the Verdi Requiem, song-cycles by Mahler and Zemlinsky, and – probably the most unusual thing we did – Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* and Broadway songs, which she delivered

with terrific panache. She is also a fantastic linguist, and she has a way of getting under the skin of every individual character and part that she performs, as well as an ability to find empathy with the individual composers. She is never somebody who uses 'the voice' – as singers so often refer to it – in a self-conscious and narcissistic way: she uses her voice in the service of the composer and the repertoire she is performing.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING**Anne Sofie von Otter**

Grieg: Songs

Bengt Forsberg *pf*

DG (6/93)



JON VICKERS

(1926-2015) Tenor

One of the great tenors of all time, the Canadian Jon Vickers was a magnificent artist, inhabiting every role with astounding intensity. Wagner, Berlioz, Beethoven and Britten formed the cornerstones of his repertoire.

STUART SKELTON Tenor

A giant, a Titan: Jon Vickers inspired so many to superlatives in descriptions of him, as man, artist and colleague – 'incandescent', 'white-hot'. He was a man of the stage and in some ways – the best of ways – an animal of it. Physically, vocally and histrionically imposing, he was also an artist capable of much gentility and finesse (witness his 'Winterstürme'). Vickers was



a singer who brought an actor's process to every role. He was fastidious, demanding and sometimes unforgiving, but always true to himself and the way he thought the story and the character

he portrayed would be best served. He was certainly uncompromising, but then the greats are always so, and it's surely part of what makes them truly great. For me, Jon Vickers is one of my absolute heroes, and naturally he casts a *very* long shadow over my own career, particularly with roles such as Parsifal, Siegmund and, above all, Peter Grimes. I liken Jon Vickers's entry into *Gramophone's* Hall of Fame to Siegmund entering Valhalla as the conquering hero. Willkommen, Held!

RECOMMENDED RECORDING**Jon Vickers**Britten: Peter Grimes
Chorus & Orch of the ROH / C Davis

Philips/Decca (3/79)



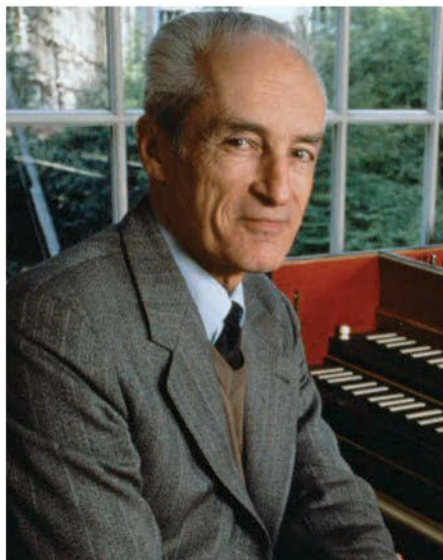
GUSTAV LEONHARDT

(1928-2012) Harpsichordist and conductor

The Dutch harpsichordist and conductor was not just a great musician but also a hugely influential one. His humility and modesty always placed the composer centre-stage, and he opened the ears of countless generations to the wonders of earlier genres of music. 'He set the standard,' wrote Philip Kennicott in these pages (Leons, January 2014). 'He had one of the liveliest musical minds of his age, and nothing in his performances was ever moribund.'

MAHAN ESFAHANI Harpsichordist

Gustav Leonhardt represents elements of the remarkable revival of the harpsichord in the modern age – both in terms of the actual

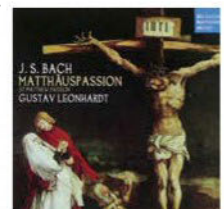


revival itself in the recital realm, and in terms of presenting the instrument on its own terms as a period instrument. By professing a lack of interest both in modern music and in pandering to popular tastes, he forced us to listen without assumptions and pre-ordained preferences. And for his work, along with that of Harnoncourt, in recording the complete surviving cantatas of JS Bach, he should be remembered for time immemorial.

RECOMMENDED RECORDING**Gustav Leonhardt**

Bach: St Matthew Passion

DHM (5/90)



FRIEDRICH GULDA

(1930-2000) Pianist

The Austrian pianist moved effortlessly between classical music and jazz, inspiring musicians and music lovers of very different persuasions. Magnificent at interpreting Mozart and Beethoven, he recorded extensively during the 1950s and '60s.



MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN Pianist

Friedrich Gulda holds the remarkable distinction of having successfully pursued two musical paths which, within a single career, usually mix as well as oil and water: 'standard' classical repertoire and jazz. That he was able to hold his own brilliantly in both these disciplines in as demanding a milieu as Vienna testifies to the stunning breadth of his musicianship. We are fortunate that he left us many exemplary recordings, ranging from Bach to big band; a video of him playing his own *For Rico* on amplified clavichord (on 'So What?!', a DVD for DG) never fails to make my day.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Friedrich Gulda
Beethoven: Piano Sonatas
Orfeo (10/10)

YEVGENY MRAVINSKY

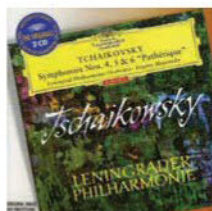
(1903-1988) Conductor

Mravinsky conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic from 1938-88, focusing on repertoire that included the premieres of six Shostakovich symphonies. A hard taskmaster, he achieved a standard of performance that remains the stuff of legend.



SEMYON BYCHKOV Conductor

Yevgeny Mravinsky's life was that of a hero, lived without compromise at the service of music. He had almost never conducted any other orchestra than his own, the Leningrad Philharmonic, which he molded into an extraordinary instrument of expression. Whatever the opposition, he persevered in imposing his vision of music and quality of performance. The recordings reveal the depth of his interpretation, but they are only a facade behind which hide the decades of rehearsals that never diminished in number nor stopped to fascinate in their intensity, vividness of imagination, humility and tireless demands placed on his musicians, while remaining aristocratically polite. Otherwise he studied nature, religion, philosophy, everything that would nourish his spirituality and translate into a musical expression that never ceased to evolve. He showed us the way not only in interpreting music, but in his attitude to it. His way of living his mission in life makes him a hero and a prophet.



RECOMMENDED RECORDING

Evgeny Mravinsky
Tchaikovsky: Symphonies Nos 4-6
Leningrad PO
DG (8/87)

CHANDOS
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June Releases



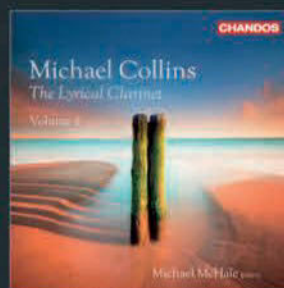
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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Patrick Rucker reviews Boris Giltburg's first all-Rachmaninov disc and welcomes a recording of refreshing individuality and originality



Rachmaninov

Études-tableaux, Op 39.

Moments musicaux, Op 16

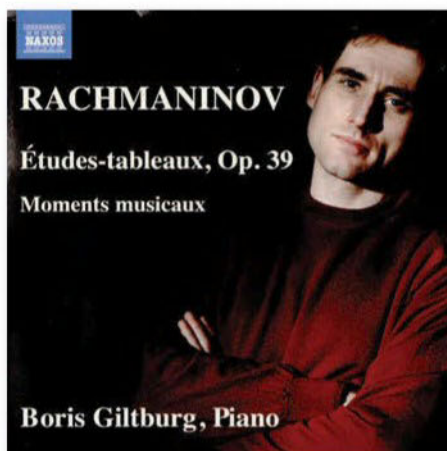
Boris Giltburg *pf*

Naxos ® 8 573469 (71' • DDD)

Boris Giltburg, the Russian-born Israeli pianist who won the 2013 Queen Elisabeth Competition, is that genuine rarity: a pianist whose Rachmaninov is entirely idiomatic yet intensely personal in a way that yields fresh perspectives on this well-traversed repertoire.

Having many of the varied qualifications that make a great Rachmaninov player certainly helps. To begin with, Giltburg's sense of rhythm is impeccable, with a chaste application of rubato that is organically derived from the life of the phrase. He is a master of the great surges and retractions of energy so specific to the composer. Giltburg's pellucid sound is never forced; his large dynamic range has a soft spectrum, between *mezzo-piano* and *ppp*, which is infinitely calibrated and shaded. Clarity is everywhere paramount. Dense chordal passages maintain beautifully balanced voicing even at breakneck speed. His *cantabile espressivo* is that of a cultivated singer and his *presto leggiero* positively dazzles. Giltburg's probing imagination unlocks within each of these small forms an individual microcosm with its own unique narrative. Rachmaninov's affective range, which in lesser hands can seem limited, here unfurls with the natural, unaffected pride of a peacock display. If cliché and sentimentality are anathema to Giltburg, one never doubts that he speaks from the heart. His eloquence derives from a poise and restraint that, while uniquely his own, is not unlike the aristocratic delivery that was the hallmark of Rachmaninov's playing.

The thoughtfully conceived programme looks back over two decades, from the



Boris Giltburg's originality stems from a convergence of heart and mind, served by immaculate technique



ripe Silver-Age Symbolist/Impressionism of the second set of *Études-tableaux*, completed before Rachmaninov's departure from Russia, to the six *Moments musicaux* of 1896.

The *Études-tableaux* in particular call to mind the old adage that, among musicians, the best techniques are those that draw least attention. The stillness from which conflict emerges and subsides in Op 39 No 2 is a quiet pool evoking some ideal, ethereal calm. The bright colours and delicate tinkling bells that embellish the folk tale of No 4 are crafted with a precision recalling Fabergé. The vast topography and heroic breadth of the mighty E flat minor, No 5, are achieved without brutality or overplaying. Even Giltburg's most driven readings, such as the harrowing flight from the furies of No 6, are tempered with vivid contrasts that heighten their character. The molten volatility, for instance, of No 1, is simultaneously a study in shape and contour, whereas the ultimate purpose of the mercurial, swirling turbulence of No 3 is withheld until the final, desolate bars.

A visit to the younger composer in the *Moments musicaux* is equally rewarding. Structurally more song-like and improvisatory than the narratives woven by the *Études*, they pose subtler interpretative problems, no doubt the reason why relatively few pianists have recorded the full set. Giltburg brings a decisive integration and cohesion to these 'miniatures', the longest of which, admittedly, stretches to seven and a half minutes.

What makes this so special? As remote as Imperial Russia under the Romanovs seems to us today, Rachmaninov himself is relatively near. Think of the excellent recordings of his playing and conducting, the film footage and photographs, and



Giltburg's Rachmaninov goes beyond received wisdom without being wilfully contrarian

the vast archival collections in Moscow, Washington and Switzerland. If few people alive today actually heard him play, the living tradition surrounding Rachmaninov, now 73 years after his death, is surely as rich as that of any comparable contemporary.

It may be, however, that the cumulative weight of this multivalent living tradition mitigates a truly fresh take on music so familiar that it can be said to have entered the vernacular. Listening to Rachmaninov's contemporaries – Hofmann, for instance, or Moiseiwitsch, Rubinstein or Horowitz – play his music, one can't help but be struck by their variety of stylistic approaches. Today, when the majority of professional pianists include some Rachmaninov in their repertoires, the interpretations

seem to have shrunk to a median of predictable responses.

This, it seems to me, is what makes Giltburg's readings so refreshing. Without ostentation or fuss, he has examined these scores in every kind of light, lived with them and come up with a vision that, without being wilfully contrarian, is nevertheless something beyond received wisdom. I suspect that before long this vision will place him among the truly memorable Rachmaninov interpreters, an elect including Moiseiwitsch, Horowitz, Kappel, Richter and Cliburn. His originality stems from a convergence of heart and mind, served by immaculate technique and motivated by a deep and abiding love for one of the 20th century's greatest composer-pianists. **G**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Christian Hoskins listens to Barenboim's latest Bruckner:

'Barenboim's new cycle takes its place as a significant addition to the Bruckner discography' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 28**



Andrew Achenbach on the start of a new Vaughan Williams cycle:

'Manze's A London Symphony brings much to admire in its clean-cut, unexaggerated demeanour' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**

Albéniz

Piano Concerto No 1, 'Concierto fantástico', Op 78^a. Rapsodia española, Op 70^a.

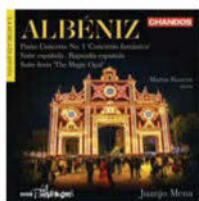
Suite española (arr Frühbeck de Burgos).

Suite from 'The Magic Opal'

► **Martin Roscoe** *pf*

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Juanjo Mena

Chandos La Música de España ⑤ CHAN10897 (80' • DDD)



For Oliver Messiaen, Albéniz was 'parmi les étoiles', and it is easy to see the attraction of

music blazing with colour and exuberance. Albéniz was no lover of pastel shades, of holding back, and an early story of his hurling a tennis ball at a mirror when as a child he was invited to play for Spanish royalty, whether true or false, is apt.

For lovers of all things Spanish (I include myself), Chandos's generous selection is wide-ranging. You may wonder at the oddly named *Concierto fantástico*. More Teutonic than fantastic, it is shadowed by Schumann and Mendelssohn and you will need to look elsewhere for a truer sense of Spain, and particularly of Andalucía. The *Rapsodia española*, though written at the same time as the concerto, is a gloriously true tribute to the character of the south. So, too, is the *Suite española*, brilliantly orchestrated by Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and making the piano original (even in Alicia de Larrocha's magisterial hands) seem relatively monochrome. Here, all is wild and vivid, with bells and castanets to the fore of the whirl of events in 'Sevilla'. And if Albéniz's opera *The Magic Opal* is set in Greece, it remains entirely authentic to the Spanish idiom.

Despite formidable competition in the concerto from Melani Mestre and in the *Rapsodia española* from de Larrocha, Martin Roscoe's performances are of exceptional skill and affection while the BBC Philharmonic under Juanjo Mena, finely recorded, play with a suitably heated, open-hearted commitment. **Bryce Morrison**

Piano Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Mestre, BBC Scottish SO, Brabbins

(6/15) (HYPE) CDA67918

Rapsodia española – selected comparison:

de Larrocha, LPO, Frühbeck de Burgos (6/84⁸, 10/84⁸)

(DECC) 410 289-2DH or 448 243-2DEC;

(ELOQ) ELQ476 2971

Bartók

Violin Concerto No 2, Sz112^a.

Concerto for Orchestra, Sz116

► **Augustin Dumay** *vn*

Montreal Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano

Onyx ⑤ ONYX4138 (82' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Maison de la Musique, Montreal, January 14 & 16, 2015



Although I would hesitate to grant this flexible and generally well-recorded live

performance of the Second Violin Concerto top-of-league status, I enjoyed it enormously, principally because it harks back to the wholesomely romantic approaches of Stern with Bernstein (Sony) and Menuhin with Dorati (Warner or Mercury) and their like. Augustin Dumay digs lustily into the concerto's opening and Kent Nagano's big-boned response sings the same language, then, come the second set (at around 2'54"), Dumay eases the pace above a quietly murmuring accompaniment. The effect is of unexpected calmness, disorientation almost, before brass choirs sound the alarm (at 4'08"). The first movement proceeds along similar lines for the duration, never hurrying unduly and with a mixture of reverie and physical abandon (eg at 8'37", where the accelerating *tutti* makes a great impact).

At the start of the *Andante tranquillo* second movement both soloist and conductor raise a gentle curtain on a world of fairy-tale, Dumay, a superb player, suggesting infinite sadness, Nagano's strings suggesting a tender embrace. At bar 42 (4'24" here) some violinists lengthen the crotchet to avoid a feeling of abruptness

(Menuhin, Mullova, Gil Shaham etc).

Zoltán Székely didn't at the 1938 premiere (Decca); neither did André Gertler (Supraphon), and nor does Dumay here. At first I wondered whether it was an editing glitch but I'm pretty sure that it isn't. The finale goes with a real swing – the opening especially – although, as in the first movement, there's plenty of room for spacious reflection (eg from 2'12").

The Concerto for Orchestra again benefits from Nagano's penchant for rich textures – richer in fact than on Dutoit's more transparent recording of the work with same orchestra for Decca, although not everything is crystal clear. Try 4'14" into the first movement, where the woodwinds are partially obscured, then sample, by way of comparison, either Dutoit himself or, even better, Iván Fischer (also Decca) in the same passage. Nagano's 'Game of Pairs' second movement, like Dutoit's, is rather heavy-handed (switch to Fischer or Reiner on RCA for a livelier approach). In the 'Elegia' the viola passage at 3'49" lacks the Hungarian-style edge achieved by Boulez in Chicago (DG), though the Intermezzo and finale lack neither character nor energy.

Summing up, a worthy and often interesting supplement to my current top recommendations: Fischer or Kocsis in the Concerto for Orchestra and Kelemen with Kocsis in the Second Violin Concerto. I'll certainly want to hang on to it. **Rob Cowan**

Violin Concerto No 2 – selected comparison:

Kelemen, Hungarian Nat PO, Kocsis

(10/11) (HUNG) HSACD32509

Concerto for Orchestra – selected comparisons:

Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer

(12/05) (PHIL) ⑤ 475 7684PB3 or 476 7255DH

Hungarian Nat PO, Kocsis (HUNG) HSACD32187

Beethoven

Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-9)

Annette Dasch *sop* **Eva Vogel** *mez*

Christian Elsner *ten* **Dimitry Ivashchenko** *bass*

Berlin Radio Choir; Berlin Philharmonic

Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Berliner Philharmoniker ⑤ ⑤ (plus ③ ⑤)

BPHR160091 (5h 44' • DDD • T/t)



A decidedly distinguished affair: Simon Rattle returns to Beethoven in Berlin with a new symphony cycle on the Berlin Philharmonic's own label

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, October 2015

Blu-ray Discs contain Pure Audio (DTS-HD MA5.1 & PCM stereo / 96kHz/24-bit) and hi-res video presentations of the performances



This set of the nine symphonies derives from two cycles given in the Berlin

Philharmonie in October 2015. Subscribers to the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall will probably be familiar with the video transmissions, included here on two Blu-ray discs. What we also have is a Blu-ray audio disc and five conventional CDs. Housed in one of the Berlin Philharmonic's elegant but impossible to file oblong boxes, it's an expensive set, though not markedly more so than the five CDs or four DVDs of the Berliners' memorable live 2001 Rome cycle under Abbado or the six CDs of Mariss Jansons' beautifully crafted 2012 Bavarian RSO set, which adds six musical 'Reflections' on Beethoven by living composers.

This is Simon Rattle's second commercially recorded traversal of the nine. The first was a live 2002 EMI set

with the Vienna Philharmonic. This received some dusty reviews, largely due to the effect of the Vienna Philharmonic being invited to play in what period-instrument people choose to call a 'historically informed' – ie vibrato-light – style. There are long sequences in the 2002 set where the Vienna players inveigle Rattle into their own richly freighted and no less 'historically informed' style; and then memorable things happen. Too often, though, conductor and orchestra are not singing from the same hymn-sheet.

All that need be said about the new set is that, after 13 years together, Rattle and the Berliners are largely at one. Rattle may want fewer players on the platform than Furtwängler or Karajan – he uses roughly 50 musicians, the same number as Harnoncourt in his widely admired Chamber Orchestra of Europe set – but this remains the Berlin Philharmonic: its distinctive style revealingly intact.

The first two symphonies are an untrammelled delight (Rattle always was a good Haydn conductor), as is a performance of the Fourth Symphony which, despite an absurdly over-prominent second-violin line at the start of the *Adagio*, closely resembles the 2001 Abbado and 1962 Karajan. The *Pastoral*, by contrast, has

a warm Bruno Walter-ish feel to it, making it a rather more congenial affair (an over-emotional nightingale notwithstanding) than the Abbado or the earlier Rattle.

But what of those old bugbears, the odd-numbered symphonies? Here Rattle has tautened his readings of the first and third movements of the Ninth to generally good effect. The Fifth Symphony, like the Eighth, now has a less enforced feel to it, though Rattle still likes to play the finale in the same tempo as the Scherzo. In Vienna he struck a tempo midway between Beethoven's two excellent metronomes; here he ups the ante by taking the tempo for the finale at 90-plus (the metronome is 84), turning a plain *allegro* into an *allegro con brio*. In the *Eroica*'s Funeral March he continues to make a curious acceleration midway through the *Maggiore*. Most conductors make accelerations as the music moves towards the central climaxes; but the staging posts come at turning points in the ascent, not halfway up the first incline.

If there is a general point to be made about rhythm, it's that the performances occasionally belie Rattle's assertion that the orchestra still commands that 'long flexible fluid line with an immense pulse underneath' which was a hallmark of the Karajan era. I'm sure it does. It's there in

much of the Seventh Symphony, in a superlative account of the finale in particular. But the sense of sustained intensity which is one of the features of Abbado's Rome cycle isn't always there. Is this due in part to the lack of a continuous beat, something Abbado and Jansons (the videos reveal) generally deploy but which Rattle often seems happy to forego, even in a work as metrically complex as the *Eroica*?

The conductor-cam option is one of the fascinations of the Abbado DVDs. It's also the option I prefer, inasmuch as it limits the input of video directors, whose grasp of the music is often tenuous. Four of the Rattle telecasts are directed by a skilled musician, Tilo Krause, but even here things occasionally fall apart: witness the chaotic filming of bars 284-97 of the first movement of the *Eroica* as the mysterious E minor subject steals out from under the shadow of the development's catastrophic climax.

The sound on the new set is for the most part clear and full-bodied, though a blurred acoustic at the start of the *Eroica* turns the two summoning crotchet chords into joined-at-the-hip dotted minims. Abbado's Rome set has the keener acoustic and, on balance, a more intent quality to the music-making. That said, this latest Berlin cycle is a decidedly distinguished affair. **Richard Osborne**

Selected comparisons:

VPO, Rattle (4/03⁸) (EMI/WARN) 457573-2

BPO, Abbado (11/08) (DG) 477 5864GM5

BPO, Abbado (5/09⁸) (EURO) 205 7374

Bavarian RSO, Jansons (12/13) (BRKL) 900119

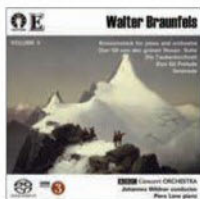
Braunfels

Don Gil von den grünen Hosen, Op 35 - No 1, Prelude; No 2, Suite. Konzertstück, Op 64^a. Die Vögel, Op 30 - No 2, Die Taubenhochzeit. Serenade, Op 20

^aPiers Lane *pf*

BBC Concert Orchestra / Johannes Wildner

Dutton Epoch (CD) CDLX7327 (65' • DDD/DSD)



The third disc in Johannes Wildner's Braunfels series with the BBC Concert

Orchestra contains the first recordings of the Prelude and Suite from the 1924 opera *Don Gil und die grünen Hosen* and of the *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra from 1946. Based on a farce by Tirso de Molina, *Don Gil* drew some critical fire at its premiere for being darker in mood than its subject warranted, an opinion Braunfels himself seemingly accepted as justified. The orchestral extracts, though, were popular in Germany in the interwar years. The Prelude, with its gossiping

counterpoint, owes much to the *Meistersinger* apprentices. The Suite, an elegant sequence of interludes and dances, draws on published collections of Spanish folk music and shares some of its thematic material with Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*.

Among the first works completed after the long public silence imposed on Braunfels by the Nazis, the *Konzertstück* is dark, abrasive and austere. A big, single-movement sonata, its exposition becomes an increasingly sinister march, and a huge, craggy cadenza, dissonant yet Bach-like, forms its development. The urbane, mock-Baroque comedy of 'The Doves' Wedding' from Braunfels's best-known opera, *Die Vögel* (1919), feels almost like light relief when it is over, and the disc is rounded off by the beautiful 1910 Serenade, Mahlerian in tone, and one of the works that put the young composer on the musical map.

The performances are strong. Wildner has a fine understanding of Braunfels's eclectic but always immediate style, and there's some superb playing, with the BBC CO wind on virtuoso form in the *Vögel* extract, and plenty of shapely string and brass phrasing elsewhere. Braunfels wrote the exacting solo part in the *Konzertstück* for himself: Piers Lane powers his way through it with great dexterity and formidable interpretative weight. **Tim Ashley**

Bruckner

Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-9)

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

Peral (Blu-ray) 481 2407

(9h 8' • DDD • peralmusic.com)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie Berlin, June 20-27, 2010 (Nos 4-9); Musikvereinsaal, Vienna, June 7-9, 2012 (Nos 1-3)



This download-only release from Peral brings together the various instalments of Daniel Barenboim's third Bruckner cycle in a single format for the first time. Symphonies Nos 1-3 have been available as downloads since 2014 but Nos 4-9 were previously released on the Accentus label only in Blu-ray Disc or DVD format, apart from Symphony No 7, which was also released on CD by DG (7/12).

Barenboim's previous cycle with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra for Teldec was mostly recorded at live concerts, and this new cycle with the Berlin Staatskapelle follows suit. Unlike the Teldec recordings, however, which were assembled over a span of seven years, this new set originates over a much shorter period of time. Indeed,

Symphonies Nos 4-9 were recorded in little more than a week during a series of concerts in June 2010. This brings an impressive consistency of approach but also results in some less positive features being replicated across the cycle. Among these is the rather arbitrary approach to dynamics noted by Richard Osborne in his review of the Blu-ray of the Sixth Symphony (4/14), as well as a general lack of truly quiet playing. And while the recording quality is perfectly transparent at moderate volumes, it tends towards cloudiness during *fff* passages, robbing climaxes of their impact. Recordings also appear to be unedited, reproducing all the inevitable mishaps of live performances. Most of these are minor, although the absence of the first *fff* timpani stroke at fig Q (14'46") in the finale of the Fifth Symphony is particularly conspicuous. Audience noise is minimal but applause has been retained after Nos 4-9.

With regard to the ever-complex issue of texts, Barenboim is beholden to any particular editorial authority, choosing Haas for Nos 4 and 8, Nowak for Nos 1, 5, 6, 7 and 9, Carragan for No 2 and Oeser for No 3. The First Symphony uses the familiar 1877 revision of the Linz score, although curiously the ascending phrase for solo cello in bar 325 of the first movement (12'01") is played by the full section, a detail normally heard in the 1891 Vienna version. Barenboim also adds timpani to the climax of the chorale in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, a feature of the later 1888 edition, although he eschews the unmarked cymbal clash that some conductors adopt near the start of the fourth movement.

With the exception of the Eighth Symphony, the new set finds Barenboim adopting tempi not only faster than those of his recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic but also frequently swifter than those with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for DG. In the case of the Second Symphony, the new performance is a full eight minutes faster than the Berlin recording, even though the same 1877 text is used. With fresh and lyrical playing from the Staatskapelle Berlin, the result is one of the more desirable performances of the new cycle. Symphonies Nos 1 and 3 are also very fine performances. The interpretation of the First Symphony verges on the impetuous on occasion, Barenboim frequently making tempo changes unmarked in the score, but the reading enjoys an invigorating sense of recreation in the outer movements and a searching account of the *Adagio*. Volatile tempi are also occasionally a feature of the Third Symphony, although not at the expense of the longer line. The *Adagio*



Piers Lane powers formidably through Braunfels's *Konzertstück* with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Johannes Wildner

unfolds organically, reaching an impassioned climax, and the Scherzo has a rollicking gait that is most attractive. This is the probably the most successful of Barenboim's three recordings of the symphony.

Not everything is an improvement on previous recordings, however. The Fifth Symphony, which enjoyed a dramatic and intense reading in the Warner set, is perhaps the least convincing performance in the new cycle. The *Adagio* is faster than before, taking only 14'19" compared with 16'15" in 1991, while in the finale Barenboim approaches the coda with almost indecent haste, only to introduce a massive *ritardando* that threatens to bring the music to a standstill. The Ninth receives a profound and moving reading but not quite on the same level as the overwhelming 1991 account with the Berlin Philharmonic. Symphonies Nos 7 and 8 enjoy extended passages of imagination and insight but also some loss of tension at key points, notably in both symphonies' codas. As for Symphonies Nos 4 and 6, both receive finely wrought performances, even if No 6 is heard to much finer effect in the Chicago set.

In summary, a project of this nature is always going to involve some hits and misses. With no real disappointments other

than perhaps Symphony No 5, and notable performances of Nos 1, 2, 3 and 9, Barenboim's new cycle takes its place alongside his two previous versions as a significant addition to the Bruckner discography. **Christian Hoskins**

Symphonies – selected comparisons:

Chicago SO, Barenboim (10/81) 477 9803GB10

BPO, Barenboim (5/95) (WARN) 2564 61891-2

Czerny

Grand Concerto, Op 214. Grand nocturne brillant, Op 95. Variations de concert sur la Marche des grecs de l'opéra 'Le siège de Corinthe' de Rossini, Op 138

Rosemary Tuck *pf*

English Chamber Orchestra / Richard Bonyngé

Naxos © 8 573417 (66' • DDD)



These days we remember Czerny principally as a student and friend of

Beethoven and a composer of numerous piano studies. His other music – and there is a lot of it – has rather fallen out of fashion, probably because these days we're suspicious of anything in which profundity blatantly takes a back seat to brilliance of effect.

Schumann perhaps summed up matters when he described Czerny as 'most talented of hacks'. The orchestral opening of the *Grand nocturne brillant* may begin in a highly dramatic mode but it's not long before the pianist takes over with writing of frothy virtuosity and a delight in pure spectacle.

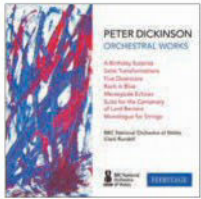
For Czerny's music to work, it needs a pianist who can dispatch such spectacle with ease. Alas, Rosemary Tuck makes heavy weather of his particular brand of effervescence, not helped by a piano that is thin-toned in the upper register. In the finale of the A minor Concerto, she sounds slightly embarrassed by the sheer silliness of its main theme. She's no more convincing where a singing line is needed – in the concerto's brief slow movement, or within the Variations on Rossini's *Le siège de Corinthe*, a premiere recording but not a reason to buy this disc. Richard Bonyngé's ECO is not on particularly good form either – it all feels rather rehearse-record to me.

Czerny's concertos (besides this A minor, there is an earlier one) have yet to be done justice on record. However, I hear that Howard Shelley has recorded them both for Hyperion with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra – save your money and wait for that.

Harriet Smith

Dickinson

A Birthday Surprise. Satie Transformations. Five Diversions. Bach in Blue. Merseyside Echoes. Suite for the Centenary of Lord Berners. Monologue for Strings
BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Clark Rundell
 Heritage   HTGCD211 (70' • DDD)



This disc of orchestral works is the latest in a string of recordings that have appeared

since the time of Peter Dickinson's 80th birthday in 2014. The pieces here tend towards the lighter side and major on his predilection for pastiche rather than the more consciously modernist outlook of the concertos (1/15), but also essay the 'stylistic modulation' that became the bedrock of his composing manifesto. This is the case with the *Satie Transformations*, the largest work here, which takes the form of variants on the first three of the Frenchman's *Gnossiennes*. Dance-like episodes bring to mind in some ways the foxtrot pastiches of Dickinson's exact contemporary and fellow Lancastrian Peter Maxwell Davies. In fact, the work's sound world sits somewhere in between Max's early parodies and the ebullience of his *Boyfriend* arrangements. Dickinson's dances, though, seem to arise more naturally; Max's always to me felt somehow contrived and forced. But perhaps that was the idea.

Satie has been a major project throughout Dickinson's career but jazz and blues, too, are crucial components in his compositional arsenal. They are deployed in *Bach in Blue*, in which a Gershwin-esque clarinet and a Grappellian violin present a quasi-improvisational gloss on the chords of the C major Prelude from the first book of the '48'. 'I felt that there must be a blues lurking somewhere beneath Bach's chords,' writes the composer, 'and found it here.' *Merseyside Echoes* opts for the rock music that came out of Liverpool in the 1960s and combines two Beatles pastiches, of which the first is a clear homage to 'Can't buy me love', before combining them à la Ives.

Ives is present too in the Sarabande of the *Five Diversions*, but then so are Copland and Hindemith. Even a serious piece such as the early *Monologue* is based on a motif from a Richard Rodgers song. The theme of *A Birthday Surprise* will come as no surprise – but perhaps its treatment will.

Throughout, as in the concertos, there is an evident joy in subverting a music's original purpose through stylistic juxtapositions and Dickinson's piquant orchestration. The BBC NOW barely put a foot wrong. It's wonderful at last to have

top-quality premiere recordings of these eight works that have waited far too long to appear on record. **David Threasher**

'Gershwin in Hollywood'

Overture (Rhapsody in Blue). Treat me rough^{ab}. But not for me^a. Slap that bass^b. They can't take that away from me^b. Strike up the band^{ab}. Funny face^b. How long has this been going on?^a. Let's kiss and make up^b. Aren't you kind of glad we did?^{ab}. Oh Lady, be good. The man I love^a. 'S Wonderful^b. For you, for me, for evermore^{ab}. Shall we dance^b. Someone to watch over me^a. Clap yo' hands^{ab}

^aLouise Dearman, ^bMatthew Ford *sgrs*

John Wilson Orchestra / John Wilson

Warner Classics   2564 64937-3 (75' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, November 16, 2015



It was said that George Gershwin would strive to write four songs first thing in the morning –

to get the bad ones out of his system. It worked. I don't believe there is any such thing as a bad Gershwin song, but the very best of them feature in this luxury assortment, with one or two that we don't hear so often like 'For you, for me, for evermore' (gorgeous) finding a new place in our consciousness and hearts. And this being a John Wilson album with his eponymous orchestra, they all wear their Sunday best orchestrations from the days when the silver screen shimmered like never before and Fred and Ginger glided across it.

The Overture from *Rhapsody in Blue* (the movie, not the jazz hybrid concert piece) sets out the stall with a galaxy of Gershwin tunes gleefully rubbing shoulders in a tantalising and virtuoso Ray Heindorf confection. And when the 'blue' tune from *Rhapsody* does inevitably make its appearance towards the close, the smokiness of the sound is beyond beguiling. It's the sound of an era. That's the thing about Wilson and his orchestra – the rightness of colour, tempo and phrasing are a given and sometimes you actually feel that if you degraded the sound and factored in a little snap, crackle and pop, then a track like 'Oh Lady, be good' – as arranged by Jerry Gray for Artie Shaw's Symphony of Swing and showcasing all the orchestra's core soloists – you'd swear it actually was the original from 1939.

That core of stylistic brilliance rips through the dance break of a number like 'Treat me rough', with trumpet genius Mike Lovatt energising the fancy footwork with attitude. And I can see why Wilson

had to include 'Let's kiss and make up' from *Funny Face*. The dance break there gets all spick and Spanish (to borrow from Lorenz Hart), with even a touch of R  s  a's *El Cid* opulence about it. You notice, too, the added frisson of an audience (the album is the first by the JWO to be recorded live) and the way they feed into the excitement of the occasion. The love for this repertoire and the quality of Wilson's revitalisation is palpable from players and audience alike.

Wilson's casting is, of course, now known to be as sound as his restoration and performance skills, and here he showcases two very particular 'finds'. Louise Dearman leaves *Wicked* behind and displays a nose for style that is partly the by-product of her 'legit' vocal training and partly of her innate sense of period. It's such a complete voice and she instinctively knows how a song like 'But not for me' – in its ravishing Conrad Salinger orchestration – goes.

Matthew Ford is truly a throwback performer, too, and with his Brylcreem-smooth and sexily husky tone (with its engaging flutter) he's perfectly in tune with his material and more than invokes the spirit of Gene Kelly in 'S Wonderful'.

Some of these songs originated on Broadway where their orchestral garb was by necessity more modest – but their journey to the silver screen and beyond was confirmation of their quality and durability. Arguably the greatest song here, 'Someone to watch over me', is given in its Lennie Hayton Star guise, with Dearman giving us the whole song simple and real and *a cappella* before the orchestra finally steals in – and when it does it's like all our Hollywood fantasies have come full circle. Now that is nostalgia. **Edward Seckerson**

Goldmark

Symphony, 'Rustic Wedding', Op 26. Overture, 'Der gefesselte Prometheus', Op 38

Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie / Frank Beermann

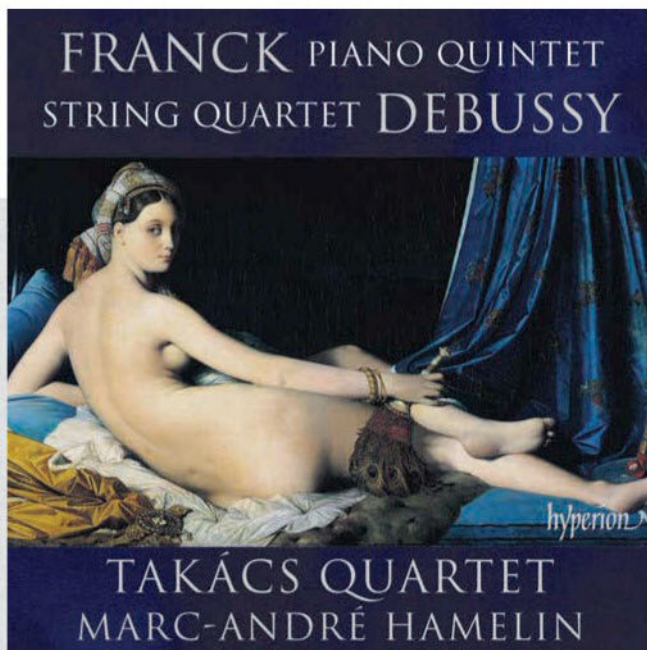
CPO   CPO777 484-2 (59' • DDD)



'Clear cut and faultless' was Brahms's judgement on Karl Goldmark's *Rustic*

Wedding Symphony, first performed in 1876. Though its bucolicism is an acquired taste, it has never lacked admirers, and its discography includes distinguished versions by Beecham, Abravanel and Bernstein.

Don't be put off here, though, by an absence of 'big names'. Frank Beermann and the Chemnitz-based Robert-Schumann-Philharmonie offer a breezily energetic



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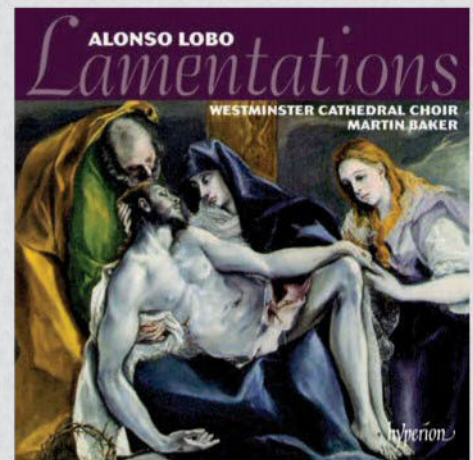
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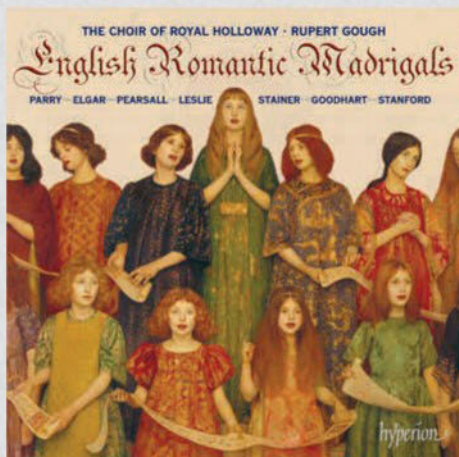
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WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL
CHOIR
MARTIN BAKER conductor



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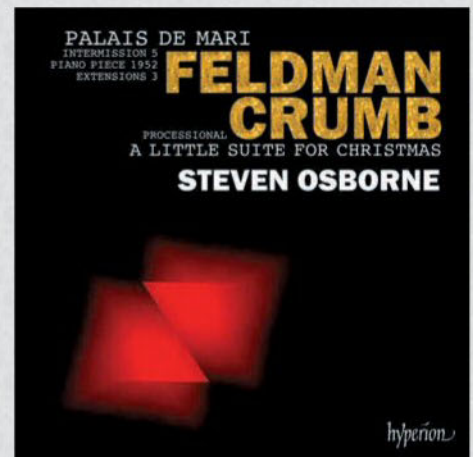
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Feldman: Palais de Mari
Crumb: A Little Suite
for Christmas
STEVEN OSBORNE piano



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performance, done with plenty of panache and wit, closer in style to Beecham's spirited elegance than Bernstein's comparative weight. The structure continues to surprise: Goldmark opens with a swirling set of folk-based variations, reserving sonata form for his breakneck finale. The debt to Brahms is very apparent, but the woodwind-writing in the amorous 'Im Garten' section and the string fugato that kicks off the final dance also reveal a familiarity with *The Bartered Bride*. The playing is virtuoso, though clarity comes at the price of a lack of warmth in the strings.

The coupling, however, is striking. Unusually for a late-19th-century composer Goldmark ignored the perceived Wagner-Brahms dichotomy (though he was dismayed by Wagner's anti-Semitism), and his Aeschylus-inspired 1890 concert overture *Prometheus Bound* attempts a fusion of formal rigour with chromatic intensity and orchestral complexity. A slow introduction, winding upwards Norn-like on strings and woodwind, leads to a massive single-movement sonata that develops themes associated with the chained titan's angry defiance and the humanity he has aided against the gods' wishes.

Beermann conducts with measured intensity. The brass-playing has tremendous majesty, nowhere more so than in the hefty first statement of Prometheus's theme against a lurching string tremolando, while the complex woodwind counterpoint that ushers in human aspiration is eloquent in the extreme. A gripping rarity, finely done.

Tim Ashley


Hellstenius · Matre

Hellstenius Like Objects in a Dark Room. Violin Concerto No 2, 'In memoriam'^a **Matre** preSage.

Violin Concerto^a

^aPeter Herresthal *vn*

Stavanger Symphony Orchestra / Rolf Gupta

BIS  BIS2152 (70' • DDD/DSD)



The name of the Norwegian Ørjan Matre (b1979) should be familiar to British

audiences following last year's Proms performance of his concert opener *preSage*, composed in 2013 for the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra to mark Vassily Petrenko's debut as principal conductor and the centenary of *The Rite of Spring*. Recorded here in its 2015 revision, *preSage* refers to the tiny section 'The Sage' in Stravinsky's ballet, deriving from it 'a simple two-note rhythm and a string harmonic chord...the basis for the rhythmic

and harmonic structures throughout the piece'. Matre's rather delicate work inhabits, compellingly, an unique expressive and musical landscape, beautifully caught by Gupta and the Stavangerans.

Forming the programme's climax, *preSage* proves effective enough, especially succeeding the two-movement Violin Concerto Matre composed in 2014. Given here in its full-orchestral guise, the concerto is a vivid, beguiling creation, the solo violin weaving its way dreamily through a fascinating aural landscape (at times quite vigorously, as is the way of dreams).

Herresthal has its measure, both technically and expressively, and is on his mettle, too, in Henrik Hellstenius's edgier *In memoriam* (2012, rev 2013), scored for a lighter orchestral accompaniment of strings and percussion. The model for the structure is the fragmentation and disorientation experienced by sufferers of Alzheimer's disease, which the composer's father died of, and a son's lament for the 'dissolution of consciousness that this terrible condition produces'. The purely orchestral *Like Objects in a Dark Room* (2007, rev 2008-14) is more abstract in origin and is compellingly performed here. Superb sound. **Guy Rickards**

Ireland

'Music for String Orchestra'


Cello Sonata^a. Bagatelle^a. Berceuse^a. Cavatina^a.

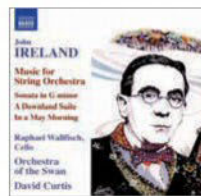
A Downland Suite. Sarnia - In a May Morning.

Soliloquy^a. Summer Evening

^aRaphael Wallfisch *vc*

Orchestra of the Swan / David Curtis

Naxos  8 571372 (64' • DDD)



Originally fashioned as a test piece for the 1932 National Brass Band Championships,

John Ireland's *A Downland Suite* (expertly retooled for string orchestra by the composer and his pupil Geoffrey Bush) is always welcome and felicitously served on this latest anthology from Warwickshire's Orchestra of the Swan under David Curtis, set down in the mellow acoustic of the Townsend Hall in Shipston-on-Stour. In the *Lento espressivo* Elegy Curtis uncovers greater anguish than does Boult on his classic Lyrta recording from December 1965 (which radiates a typically unforced, tender glow all its own), whereas in the ensuing Minuet it's Julian Lloyd Webber and a richer-toned ECO (also on Naxos, 4/15) who perhaps more consistently tug at the heartstrings. That said, I do love the thrusting vigour of Curtis's Prelude

(precisely *Allegro energico* as marked), and his shapely and infectiously spirited account overall is a most winning one.

Proceedings are launched with Matthew Forbes's sympathetic orchestration of Ireland's yearningly impassioned Cello Sonata from 1923, which successfully brings out this work's kinship with the rugged tone-poem *Mai-Dun* (1921). That tireless champion of British music Raphael Wallfisch plays with full-throated eloquence; Curtis and company provide most sympathetic support. Of Graham Parlett's six reworkings of solo piano pieces four are scored for cello and strings. All fall gratefully on the ear, though in the case of the exquisite 'In a May Morning' from *Sarnia* (1940-41) I do find it almost impossible to banish from my mind Ireland's fastidiously idiomatic keyboard-writing.

By all means, then, investigate this very likeable survey – but don't deprive yourself of experiencing the chamber and instrumental originals as well.


Andrew Achenbach

Karaev

Violin Concerto^a. *Vingt ans après – nostalgie...*^b

^aPatricia Kopatchinskaja *vn* ^aAzerbaijan State Symphony Orchestra / Rauf Abullayev; ^bRussian

State Symphony Capella / Valery Polyansky

Paladino  PMR0070 (60' • DDD)



These two works by the Azerbaijani composer Faradz Karaev (b1943) date

from 2004 (Violin Concerto) and 2009 (*Vingt ans après – nostalgie...*) respectively. Despite the fact that its German title specifies 'concerto for orchestra and solo violin', the first composition depends greatly on the personality of a soloist – like Patricia Kopatchinskaja – able to do full justice to both the fragmented skitterings of the early stages and the haunted simplicity of the ending, as the music discovers its essential theme. The journey it makes is nothing if not intense, with the various allusions signalled in the central movement – the Mendelssohn Concerto prominent among them – seeming to stand for a protagonist's painful search for a relatively stable identity. The music impresses through its sheer insistence, and especially in the finale, where obsessively rhythmic dance material yields to the sad simplicity of the coda. The performance is suitably forceful and concentrated, despite the constricted recording.

Vingt ans après – nostalgie... has better sound, though it still lacks the spacious

resonances the music calls for. This work is dedicated to the memories of Edison Denisov and Alfred Schnittke, who died in 1996 and 1998 respectively, and uses musical letters from their names to generate an eerily compelling homage. Karaev can be compared with other enigmatic composers of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras, such as Galina Ustvolskaya and Valentin Silvestrov, with a curious blend of pared-down austerity and agonised expansiveness that projects a memorably elegiac, sometimes protesting persona. Despite its technical limitations and poor presentation, this release rewards repeated listening.

Arnold Whittall

Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 1, K37;
No 17, K453; No 20, K466

Ingrid Jacoby *pf* Academy of St Martin
in the Fields / Sir Neville Marriner
ICA Classics © ICAC5137 (80' • DDD)



Brave is the soul
who dares to allow
him or herself to be
compared to the great

Mozart pianists of the past and present. Ingrid Jacoby does just that in the latest instalment in a continuing concerto cycle, contrasting early – the First Concerto, a *pasticcio* of sonata movements by Raupach, unknown and Honauer – with late, in the form of the D minor K466, perhaps the most famous of them all, and the G major K453, an instant charmer even if it's often overshadowed by its big brothers.

Jacoby responds well to the character of K453 but the figurations are so well honed that they come to feel rather too pat, as if Jacoby were keen to show that all that practice had paid off. Minor features such as a sudden *piano* on the repeat of a figure seem too well prepared and go on to become ticks rather than responses to a musical discourse. Nevertheless, her playing is muscular and blends well with the Academy and Marriner, who have this music in their blood and play with their trademark urbanity and flexibility virtually throughout.

Problems set in in the finale, when problems of ensemble become noticeable. The opening movement of the D minor comes a cropper, never finding its groove or rising to the heights of *Sturm und Drang* it does in the hands of, say, Martha Argerich. Again, in the central convulsion

of the second-movement Romance, ensemble comes off the rails and both soloist and orchestra seem to be waiting for each other to make the first move. The early K37, remarkable only for the very fact of its existence, fills up the disc for completeness's sake.

I can't imagine this replacing favourite recordings on the shelf: for me, among recent recordings, Argerich in the D minor and Pires in the G major. Jacoby, sorry to say, simply doesn't have the João factor.

David Thresher

Piano Concerto No 17 – selected comparison:

Pires, COE, Abbado (2/96) (DG)

439 941-2GH, 477 5747GMO

or 479 1435GM2

Piano Concerto No 20 – selected comparison:

Argerich, Orch Mozart, Abbado

(3/14) (DG) 479 1033GH

Penderecki

'Concertos for String
Instruments and Orchestra'

Violin Concerto^a. Viola Concerto (version
for cello)^b. Cello Concerto^c. Largo^c

^aPatrycja Piekutowska *vn* ^bIvan Monighetti,

^cJakob Spahn, ^dClaudio Bohórquez *vcs*

The Polish Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra /

Krzysztof Penderecki, Maciej Tworek

Dux © DUX1275 (78' • DDD)



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– BBC Music Magazine



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Penderecki

'Concertos for Wind Instruments and Orchestra' *Fonogrammi*^a. *Capriccio*^b. Horn Concerto, 'Winterreise'^c. Sinfonietta No 2^c

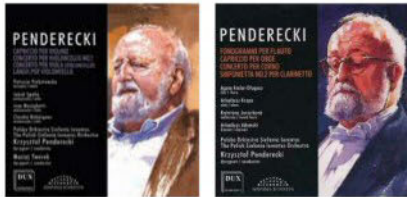
^aAgata Kielar-Długosz *fl*^bArkadiusz Krupa *ob*

^dArkadiusz Adamski *cl*^cKateřina Javůrková *hn*

The Polish Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra /

Krzysztof Penderecki

Dux Ⓢ DUX1274 (47' • DDD)



Dux's Penderecki edition continues apace with these two impressive surveys of concertos for string and wind instruments, both of them bringing together a wide chronological spectrum of music. The string concerto collection ranges from the *Capriccio* for violin and orchestra from 1967 to the *Largo* for cello and orchestra from 2003. The *Capriccio* was itself based on an earlier work, a concerto from four years previously that the composer withdrew, and, in its ironic stance, its closest relatives are probably works by Schnittke from the same period, though its vocabulary is very different. It nevertheless shares the Russian composer's sense of the dramatic, and this performance by Patrycja Piekutowska, under Penderecki's own direction, is attentive to every nuance, something greatly helped by Dux's outstandingly clear recording. The Cello Concerto from 1972 is a paradox, as Iwona Linstedt points out in her booklet-notes, in that, in spite of its standard three-movement form, it is less conventionally a concerto than the earlier *Capriccio*. It is, nonetheless, a tremendously exciting, colourful work that convinces not only on account of colour but of its musical argument. Jakob Spahn is a soloist who follows that argument from beginning to end not only with conviction but with clear enjoyment.

Ivan Monighetti is the soloist in the cello version (1989) of the Viola Concerto, and I think he has a harder task. This is a work of the 'new' Penderecki, the gestures still rather fragmented and the melodic content not hugely expansive, but nevertheless a milestone on the road to the composer's post-tonal second period. The soloist's task is hard, it seems to me, precisely because there is a contradiction between form and content, and there is no irony as there would have been in Schnittke – it is heart-on-sleeve. Nevertheless, if you are going to listen to the work, this version is more than highly recommendable. The *Largo*, from 2003, written for Rostropovich to play in

his last public concert, is very different, constructed as it is using long cantilenas in a way that seems far more structurally consequent than in the preceding piece. Here the soloist is the remarkable Claudio Bohórquez, who more than has the measure of the work: it would be hard to imagine a more convincing performance.

The wind disc also begins with a lesser-known classic from the early period, *Fonogrammi* (1961). A striking, beautifully orchestrated work, it's not really a concerto in fact but has a substantial intervention for solo flute about halfway through. The *Capriccio* for oboe and 11 strings, from four years later, is quite different in character, a genuinely virtuoso piece, as much for the string players as for the soloists, but that provides no problems for the outstanding Sinfonia Iuventus, and Arkadiusz Krupa is a commanding soloist. The epic Horn Concerto, subtitled *Winterreise* though devoid of any quotations from Schubert, dates from 2008 and is naturally utterly different in style. Its opening, mysterious and portentous, may well constitute the most beautiful two minutes of music the composer has ever written; the work subsequently takes us on a historical tour of the horn's character, as it were, glimpses of frozen beauty suddenly appearing in the midst of music that can often be surprisingly jocular. It's intriguing but I don't feel that it really hangs together as a whole, convincing though the case made for it by soloist Kateřina Javůrková undoubtedly is. The Sinfonietta No 2 (1994) is a much tighter work, once again a reworked transcription, in this case of the Clarinet Quartet. It plays, rather enigmatically, with the idea of intimacy between the instruments, in a kind of homage to the Viennese musical tradition, though of course that intimacy takes on different aspects in the new version.

These two discs inevitably make one reflect on Penderecki's musical journey; and while that seems to me a somewhat uneven trajectory, one could hardly ask for better materials with which to study that journey than these superbly performed and recorded discs, under the direction of the composer himself. **Ivan Moody**

Prokofiev

Symphony No 5, Op 100

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live Ⓢ RCO16002 (43' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live, September 17-19 & 21, 2014

Prokofiev

Symphony No 5, Op 100. Scythian Suite, Op 20

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin /

Tugan Sokhiev

Sony Classical Ⓢ 88875 18515-2 (68' • DDD)



Reading Julian Barnes's Shostakovich-based novella *The Noise of Time* (Jonathan Cape, 4/16), I couldn't help thinking how the unpredictable Prokofiev, a much less likeable figure, might have made a more suitable subject. That Prokofiev could be every bit as Janus-faced as his great rival is confirmed by these fine yet very different recordings. Common to both is a textural clarity which, like the silenced audiences, belies the limitations of live recording, at least until we arrive at that awkward passage near the end of the Fifth Symphony when the composer suddenly reduces the dynamic level as if to make us confront the compromised and fretful quality of the rejoicing.

Tugan Sokhiev, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and his sound team are otherwise on splendid form for their unapologetically mainstream account of the Fifth. This much sought-after maestro takes the first movement broadly enough to lend credence to what might seem mere ideological posturing: the composer's oft-quoted words equating its content to 'the grandeur of the human spirit'. There are a few tank-like manoeuvres en route – Prokofiev would certainly have expected the first movement's second theme to flow less stickily – but everything works in context. The scherzo is suitably brilliant, the third movement darker and more profound than usual, the finale as scintillating as I've ever heard it. By contrast, the modernist bite of the *Scythian Suite* may strike listeners as somewhat understated. There's a racier, punchier account from Claudio Abbado and the outsize Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela on DVD only (Accentus). Still, this one is arguably just as potent when it comes to Prokofiev's eerier atmospherics.

Unlike Sony Classical, RCO Live provides no coupling for the symphony, banking perhaps on the fact that this is a work to which Mariss Jansons has always brought a particular sensibility. His speeds have slowed since 1987 when his coruscating Leningrad Philharmonic rendition was captured in Dublin (Chandos, 5/88) but he remains markedly swifter than latter-day rivals in the first and third movements. Soviet Russian conductors once routinely



Christoph Denoth records Aranjuez plus works by Malats and Palomo with the LSO under Jesús López-Cobos (review on page 31)

interpreted the composition this way, which is not to say that the monumentalism of Karajan and now Sokhiev is misguided. It's just another option. With a wonderful if rather too plush-sounding hall and a (mostly) glorious orchestra, Jansons secures a soft-grained interpretation that should satisfy his admirers. A pity that the booklet-notes so often get the wrong end of the stick – the finale is said to 'culmin[ate] in something approaching a euphoric jam session'. The listener will decide precisely what mood the composer is seeking to convey but it's difficult to think of music in which strict fidelity to the written score and absolute rhythmic discipline are more essential. Jansons's denouement is as scrupulous as ever yet there's just a hint of routine in the tired horn-playing near the start of the movement. I haven't heard the performance included in *Mariss Jansons Live – The Radio Recordings 1990–2014* (RCO) but suspect it is largely the same as this one, with the addition of concluding applause. Characteristically inscrutable artwork makes play with red chess pieces and bronze pawns as if shot from above but Sokhiev has the more convincing moves. **David Gutman**

Ravel

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Daphnis et Chloé^a.

Valses nobles et sentimentales

^aSWR Vocal Ensemble, Stuttgart;

SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart /

Stéphane Denève

SWR Music © SWR19004CD (73' • DDD)



Stéphane Denève's recorded legacy from the time he was at the helm of the Royal

Scottish National Orchestra is primarily of Roussel, but now that he is Chief Conductor of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra he has turned his attentions to Ravel. This is Vol 3 of the orchestral works, coupling the complete ballet score of *Daphnis et Chloé* with the *Valses nobles et sentimentales*.

Denève's credentials in this music are secure and his touch is sure, but last year in quick succession there appeared two other versions of *Daphnis*, one of which at least presents a significant challenge to this new release. That was the disc from Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra on BIS, coupled with the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (the

other was from Philippe Jordan and the Orchestre de l'Opéra National de Paris, coupled with *La valse*). Nézet-Séguin had the edge, and he still does.

There is a great deal to relish in Denève's interpretation, not least the hushed opening, the sharp characterisation of the 'Danse grotesque de Dorcon' or the liquid 'Lever du jour'. Nézet-Séguin's secret, though, is in the very real sense of movement that he brings to the music, through astute (and thoroughly natural) shaping of musical paragraphs and through the supple control of rhythm and dynamics. This is as much the case in the slower dances as in the quicker ones. For example, the Stuttgart orchestra plays the 'Danse lente et mystérieuse des nymphes' beautifully, but the atmosphere and the ebb and flow of the music are much more compelling with Nézet-Séguin, who also finds a more elemental force in the 'Danse guerrière'.

Stylistically, Denève is spot on in taste and sonority, as he is in the *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, though, again, there are times when the music seems to call for a little more flexibility and focus than it receives.

Geoffrey Norris

Daphnis et Chloé – selected comparisons:

Rotterdam PO, Nézet-Séguin (5/15) (BIS) BIS1850

Paris Op Orch, P Jordan (7/15) (ERAT) 2564 61668-4 ▶

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

21st-CENTURY CROSS-CURRENTS

Arnold Whittall listens to a selection of releases featuring orchestral works by a new generation of European composers

The latest release in the Royal Flemish Philharmonic's own-label CD series features three large-scale works by **Wim Henderickx** (b1962). The booklet's useful essay by Tom Janssens makes much of the composer's multiculturalism; Henderickx has been inspired by his travels to India and Nepal and also responds to modern artists as different as sculptor Anish Kapoor and painter Agnes Martin. The Kapoor-inspired Symphony *At the Edge of the World* ends with what can easily be taken for a representation of Armageddon, evoking the terrifying prospect of those endless black spaces lying around and beyond this particular planet. And *Empty Mind* – in its original form for oboe and electronics as well as in a second version adding layers of orchestral material to the mix – aims to project a more meditative response to contemplating 'the void' as something of special spiritual significance. Even *Groove!* for percussion and orchestra (Henderickx trained as a percussionist) claims to place its exuberance and fervency in a mystical, magical context. But how much these contexts register – even in colourful performances of exemplary intensity – will depend on the listener's ability to go along with the composer's all-important convictions. There's a risk that (to the sceptic) the music itself is subordinated to those convictions, shading into sound effects in pursuit of its extramusical goals. But if the goals and contexts convince, any reservations one might have about the music as such are probably beside the point.

A very different kind of own-label enterprise is provided by the second instalment of the LSO **Panufnik Legacies**, presenting some recent results of the orchestra's admirably extensive sponsorship schemes. In *Panufnik Variations* nine composers provide variations (the longest just under three minutes) on a theme from Andrzej Panufnik's *Universal Prayer* which has been orchestrated by Colin Matthews. Matthews also frames the piece with two short variations of his own, and the whole set is effectively shaped



Percussionist Pieterjan Franckx joins the Royal Flemish Philharmonic for Wim Henderickx's *Groove!*

around the central contrast between two lively contributions (by Toby Young and Elizabeth Winters) and a much more sombre segment from Larry Goves. Music by nine other composers involved in LSO sponsorship schemes completes the disc, with Matthew Kaner (*The Calligrapher's Manuscript*) and Alastair Putt (*Spiral*) – the latter my personal favourite – being allotted the most substantial shares of the available time. Although the nature of the commissions leads to a good deal of well-upholstered orchestral writing, there are also hints of more experimental kinds of musical thinking not often heard in traditional symphony concerts.

Another sponsorship scheme – the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation series of CDs, set up in 2011 in conjunction with Col Legno – goes from strength to strength. The three latest offerings are well contrasted but unfailingly absorbing, and although the presentation, with detailed notes including reproductions from the composers' sketches and manuscripts, is unapologetically specialised, the music

is usually arresting enough to grab the listener even if the accompanying materials are ignored.

American-born **Mark Barden** (b1980) is probably the most abrasive of the three, his music tending to the experimental in its openness to wild, confrontational explorations of shifts between sound and noise, and avoiding what he might disdainfully view as conventionally expressive gestures. Barden has worked with the British Berlin-based composer Rebecca Saunders and has doubtless thought long and hard about her fiercely expressionistic yet rigorously controlled instrumental dramas, while managing to travel just that bit further away from mainstream expressionism into even bleaker regions of unsparing austerity. This music goes to great lengths to keep lyricism at bay; and in the extreme case of *die Haut Anderer* ('The Skin of Another') for piano, it freezes into rapid reiterations of a single high note for minutes on end before reverting to its initial fragmented manner in a final disintegration.

If you play the two *Amoretti* by **Birke J Bertelsmeier** (b1981) immediately after any of the Barden tracks you'll assume an easy-going embrace of genial minimalism which could hardly be more different to Barden. Yet most of her compositions have more varied tensions, using the associations with folk-like idioms flagged in the disc's title and in the tipsy exuberance of the ensemble piece *folklich* (2012). Most productively, Bertelsmeier explores contrasts between short, brittle cells and more sustained melodic materials from which she generates appealing and distinctive forms, especially in *Quartettstück* (2008) and the wittily titled *Whirligig* for solo flute (2012).

These impressive levels of accomplishment are more than matched by Britain's **Christian Mason** (b1984) in a programme including a substantial three-movement orchestral work, *Isolarion: Rituals of Resonance* (2012-13), that manages to suggest new angles on Birtwistle's processional style and also on George Benjamin's searchingly refined textural manoeuvres, perhaps by way of shared roots in Varèse. At the other textural extreme, *Learning Self-Modulation* (2011) for violin and piano consistently rethinks the archetypal polarity of the duo's constitution, to the extent of having both players vocalise in the final section. No less strikingly, *Layers of Love* (2015) can work with aspects of spectral harmony evoking Jonathan Harvey or Claude Vivier that serve to highlight rather than obscure Mason's own distinctive musical voice. This ability to acknowledge debts without becoming merely derivative is a powerful feature of much of the music on all three of these well recorded and superbly performed Col Legno discs. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Henderickx *At the Edge of the World*
Royal Flemish PO / Brabbins, Waart
RFP ② RFP011



Various Cpsrs *Panufnik Legacies II*
LSO / Roth
LSO Live ⑤ LSO5070



Barden *Monoliths*
Various artists
Col Legno ⑥ WWEISACD40413



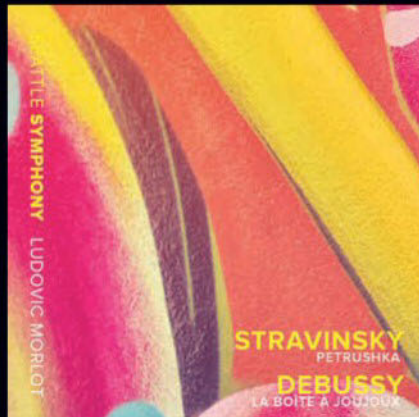
Bertelsmeier *folklich*
Various artists
Col Legno ⑥ WWEICD40414



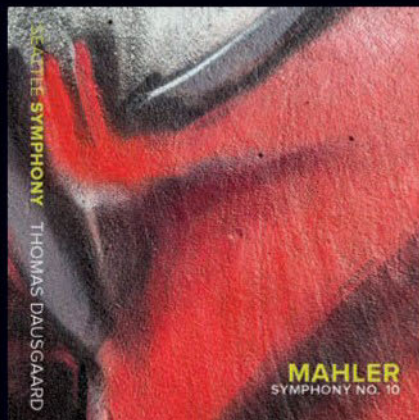
CMason *Unseen Light*
Various artists
Col Legno ⑥ WWEICD40415

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Ravel

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Chabrier Menuet pompeux **Debussy** Danse.

Sarabande **Mussorgsky** Pictures at an

Exhibition **Schumann** Carnaval (all orch Ravel)

Lyon National Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin

Naxos © 8 573124 (61' • DDD)



Considering the cultural links that existed between Russia and France at the turn

of the 20th century, it is no surprise that Ravel should have jumped at the chance of colouring in Mussorgsky's *Pictures* in 1922, particularly as he had already collaborated with Stravinsky in orchestrating the opera *Khovanshchina* for Diaghilev. The Mussorgsky/Ravel score has not exactly been short of takers in the recording studio, stretching as the catalogue does from the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Koussevitzky in 1930 up to modern classics by Claudio Abbado and the LSO, Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic and Giulini with the Chicago Symphony.

Leonard Slatkin has already recorded it with the St Louis Symphony Orchestra, having also released a disc with the Nashville Symphony that was an amalgam of various other orchestrators' slants on Mussorgsky's piano suite. This new one, setting the Mussorgsky transcription alongside Ravel's scoring of Chabrier, Debussy and Schumann, is a disappointment compared with the high quality of Slatkin's previous discs of Ravel for Naxos with the Orchestre National de Lyon. *Pictures* just sounds a bit middle-of-the-road, compared, say, with the radical approach taken by Mariss Jansons with the Royal Concertgebouw in a live recording made in 2008. Jansons was controversial, maybe, because he chose to show how Ravel had Frenchified the music and smoothed down some of the raw edges of Mussorgsky's original, but Slatkin's version, while decently played by the Lyon orchestra, neither makes the pulse race nor the hackles rise.

Ravel's characteristic brilliance and finesse come through in the *Menuet pompeux* by Chabrier and the comparatively familiar orchestration of Debussy's *Sarabande* and *Tarantelle styrienne*, but some garishness and glitter are stylistically at odds with Schumann's *Carnaval* and the final 'Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins' is positively horrible.

Geoffrey Norris

Mussorgsky – selected comparison:
RCO, Jansons (RCO) RCO09004

Rimsky-Korsakov

Symphonies – No 1, Op 1; No 3, Op 32

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Gerard Schwarz

Naxos © 8 573581 (58' • DDD)



Gravesend is an unlikely location for a Russian opus 1, but the *Andante tranquillo* of

Rimsky-Korsakov's First Symphony was composed there while the 17-year-old was on naval duty. César Cui dubbed it the first truly Russian symphony. Rimsky revised and reorchestrated it in 1884, transposing it from E flat minor to E minor. The composer's symphonies get short shrift, both in the concert hall and on disc. Only the Second gets the occasional outing, mostly due to its *Sheherazade*-like oriental flavour. Prolific recording conductor Gerard Schwarz has given us three discs of Rimsky's orchestral music with the Seattle Symphony. For the First and Third, he now teams up with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Naxos provides a beefy Berlin sound, with weighty strings and imposing brass. With the First Symphony Schwarz misses some of the magic in an earthbound slow movement – whose folksong was suggested by Balakirev – but the Scherzo has a fine swagger to it, building a good head of steam. Schwarz is a bit of a heavy breather on the podium which, once noticed, becomes distracting.

The Third Symphony is alive with melodic ideas, opening in good-natured C major. Clarinet teases and flute and solo violin intertwine sinuously (this is still pre-*Sheherazade*), although the Berlin RSO could produce more pronounced staccato for the bustling 5/4 Scherzo. The *Andante* flows along swiftly – both Kees Bakels and Neeme Järvi on rival accounts take far more time – and the symphony ends ebulliently.

Schwarz's accounts don't quite come up to the level of the recorded competition (Bakels drawing spirited playing from the Malaysian Philharmonic, while Järvi is a master in Russian repertoire) but they should win new friends for these amiable works. **Mark Pullinger**

Selected comparisons – coupled as above:

Gothenburg SO, N Järvi (2/89) (DG) 459 512-2GTA2

Malaysian PO, Bakels (9/05) (BIS) BIS-CD1477

Shostakovich · Weinberg · Lutosławski

Lutosławski Little Suite

Shostakovich Cello Concerto No 1, Op 107

Weinberg Cello Concerto, Op 43

Nicolas Altstaedt vs **Deutsches Symphonie-**

Orchester Berlin / Michał Nesterowicz

Channel Classics © CCS38116 (72' • DDD)



Weinberg's Cello Concerto is one of those products of the time of the Soviet

Union's 1948 anti-formalism campaign that went into the composer's desk drawer, in this case only to emerge in 1957, four years after the death of Stalin. While it would be a stretch to compare it to masterpieces in that category such as Shostakovich's First Violin Concerto and Fourth and Fifth String Quartets, it has many fine qualities, from the lyrically ruminating first movement to the unexpected and extraordinarily touching return of that mood at the end of the finale. There is even what seems to be a clear anticipation of the main motif of the first movement of Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto, though care is needed here, since Shostakovich had already used the selfsame motif in his film score to *The Young Guard*, at precisely the time Weinberg was working on his concerto.

Nicolas Altstaedt has evidently taken the piece to his heart, and his playing is of a subtlety and command to match that of Claes Gunnarsson on Chandos (coupled with the only recording of Weinberg's Twentieth Symphony); in the first two movements Altstaedt even finds some shades of *echt* Weinbergian wistfulness that elude his more warmly declamatory Swedish rival. Rostropovich is *hors concours* for sheer eloquence and artistic presence, but his is a live performance, with some scrambling in the Scherzo, and in places his 1964 recording does sound its age.

In the Shostakovich Concerto, too, there are many pages where Altstaedt needs fear no comparison, in a market full of first-rate accounts. Were his never less than capable hornist sidekick equally outstanding, and were it not for a slight sense of rush towards the end of the massive cadenza, I would place this new recording among the very finest.

The Lutosławski Suite is a charming makeweight, nicely chosen as a close contemporary to Weinberg's Concerto, but not a compelling reason for favouring the Channel Classics disc. Recording quality is excellent and the booklet essay respectable (though it places the Great Terror in 1948-49, when in fact it took place 12 years earlier). **David Fanning**

Weinberg – selected comparisons:

Gunnarsson, Gothenburg SO, Svedlund

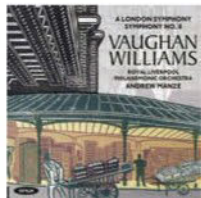
(9/12) (CHAN) CHS45107

Rostropovich, USSR St SO, Rozhdstvennsky

(MELO) MELCD100 2315

Vaughan Williams

Symphonies – No 2, 'A London Symphony'; No 8
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /
Andrew Manze
 Onyx (P) ONYX4155 (76' • DDD)



Repertoire, orchestra, producer (Andrew Keener) and venue (Liverpool

Philharmonic Hall) prompt rosy memories of Vernon Handley's distinguished March 1992 sessions for EMI Eminence (8/93, now available on CFP). How do Andrew Manze's accounts hold up against such formidable competition? Pretty well, I'd say. With the RLPO on their toes throughout, Manze's agreeably vigilant reading of *A London Symphony* brings much to admire in its clean-cut, unexaggerated demeanour, though some – myself included – may feel he occasionally fights just a little shy of the darker emotions coursing beneath RVW's sublimely compassionate masterpiece; for example, the third movement's remarkable coda should surely shudder with a rather greater sense of expectant hush ahead of that 'great tragic cry' (to borrow a phrase used by Donald

Tovey in a different context) which launches the finale.

Where Handley remains unassailable, of course, is in the architectural splendour of his magnificently inevitable conception – I'd put it on a par with his mentor Adrian Boult's toweringly cogent 1952 Decca version (set down at Kingsway Hall in the presence of the composer); and for sheer lump-in-the-throat wonder and intoxicating atmosphere it's still hard to beat the 1957 Hallé/Barbirolli and 1972 LSO/Previn. Even so, this vividly engineered newcomer has plenty going for it – and the spruce performance of the Eighth likewise reveals Manze as a stylish and committed interpreter. In the ravishing Cavatina for strings alone, the RLPO can't quite match the silky sheen of, say, Slatkin's Philharmonia or Haitink's LPO, but the heartwarming lyricism on show offers ample compensation. Elsewhere, Manze invests the jaunty Scherzo and riotous Toccata finale with gleeful mischief and swagger respectively, while the inimitably subtitled opening 'Variazioni senza tema' has both polish and purposefulness in its favour.

So, a very decent first instalment in this cycle for Onyx – and next up, I gather, is a pairing of *A Pastoral Symphony* and No 4.

Andrew Achenbach

Vaughan Williams

Fat Knight. Overture 'Henry V'.
 Serenade to Music (orchestral version)^a
^a**James Clark** v71

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Martin Yates
 Dutton Epoch (P) CDLX7328 (74' • DDD/DSD)



No sooner had I greeted Lyrita's enterprising refurbishment of

Stanford Robinson's 1956 BBC broadcast of RVW's Falstaff opera *Sir John in Love* (3/16) than along comes Martin Yates's sparkling orchestration of the composer's own sizeable two-piano arrangement of the same work. Cast in six movements and a finale, *Fat Knight* takes its name from the composer's provisional title for the opera and plays for around 53 minutes. The descriptive titles given to each movement were sanctioned by the RVW Trust and make it easier to follow the action. I was especially taken with the extended fourth movement entitled 'A field near Windsor' (which derives all its material from Act 3 scene 2 and includes the Entr'acte, the tune *Greensleeves* and finale) and agree with annotator Lewis Foreman that it could

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justifiably be programmed as a standalone item. Yates secures some commendably alert playing from the RSNO, who seem to be thoroughly enjoying the whole experience – and a special mention for the principal trombone, whose splendidly ostentatious pronouncements in the second movement ('Falstaff at the Garter Inn') are guaranteed to raise a smile.

Yates is also responsible for the expert orchestration of the *Henry V* overture, originally conceived for brass band and probably first heard at a historical pageant some time in 1933 or 1934. Certainly, it's hard to conceive of a more sympathetic performance of either this or the radiant *Serenade to Music* in its purely orchestral guise, in which leader James Clark plays with rapturously songful tone. Unlike some recent Dutton SACDs, this is a genuine multichannel production, whose glowingly realistic sound emanates from the acoustically kind surroundings of Dundee's Caird Hall. **Andrew Achenbach**

'Apasionado'

Lalo *Symphonie espagnole*, Op 21
Ravel *Tzigane* **Sarasate** *Romanza andaluza*, Op 22. *Zigeunerweisen*, Op 20 **Waxman** *Carmen Fantasy*
Ning Feng *vn* **Principality of Asturias Symphony Orchestra** / **Rossen Milanov**
 Channel Classics © CCS37916 (72' • DDD)



The best thing about this disc is the programme, followed closely by the recorded

sound and, a short distance behind that, the soloist, the fiery Asturias players and their conductor. It opens with *Zigeunerweisen*, Sarasate's old warhorse, followed by a French composer's symphonic postcard from Spain dedicated to Sarasate, whose languorous *Romanza andaluza* succeeds it. With *Tzigane*, we return to the world of *Zigeunerweisen* but filtered through the refined ears of another French composer, and end with a potpourri of themes from an opera by another Frenchman whose eponymous heroine is a *Zigeunermädchen* from Spain, Sarasate's home country.

Now it just so happened that immediately before his disc arrived for review, some research for another project led me to play for the first time in years Sarasate's own 1904 G&T recording of *Zigeunerweisen* (slightly abridged) partnered by his longtime (uncredited) accompanist Berthe Marx. I had forgotten what a wonderful sound document it is, with the composer's legendary dexterity still intact

and – the big difference between him and Ning Feng – his innate charm colouring every bar. The *fioritura* passages in the *lassan* section are nonchalantly thrown away, while he brings a sparkling mischief to the show-stopping *friska*.

Ning Feng (b1982, Chengdu, China) is a multiple competition prize-winner with an iron-clad technique, a dazzling left hand and a firm, rich tone which one cannot help but admire. Here, he also sounds steely, unsmiling and entirely charisma-free. The *fioritura* is over-deliberate and given inappropriate importance, while the *friska* is more aggressive than playful. These characteristics permeate the rest of the disc and militate against the generally sunny disposition of the music. If you had never heard Perlman or Repin in the Lalo, Vengerov in *Tzigane* or the peerless Heifetz in Waxman's *Carmen Fantasy* (almost two minutes faster than the newcomer, incidentally), you would sit back and applaud Ning Feng. If, on the other hand, you had, then you might find your attention wandering.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Nocturnos de Andalucía'

Malats *Serenata española* **Palomo** *Nocturnos de Andalucía* **Rodrigo** *Concierto de Aranjuez*
Christoph Denoth *gtr* **London Symphony Orchestra** / **Jesús López-Cobos**
 Signum © SIGCD444 (68' • DDD)

'Guitar Concertos'

Brouwer *Concierto de Benicàssim* **F Martin** *Guitare* **Rodrigo** *Concierto de Aranjuez*
Miguel Trápaga *gtr*
Galicia Royal Philharmonia / **Óliver Díaz**
 Naxos © 8 573542 (67' • DDD)



Sometimes a work's ubiquity blinds us to its brilliance. Familiarity breeds – albeit amiable, cosy – contempt. Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* could be considered such a work. But fresh juxtapositions yield fresh perspectives. And so it proves here with two highly enjoyable new recordings that provide attractive new settings for Rodrigo's jewel.

Spanish composer Lorenzo Palomo's suite for guitar and orchestra *Nocturnos de Andalucía* might use an orchestra more than twice the size of Rodrigo's, but Palomo's writing exhibits the same kind of elegant restraint. This magnificent tone-poem, with its lush, flamenco-hued evocations of

shifting passions beneath the stars, thus balances rather than overwhelms Rodrigo's chamber-like atmosphere – a genuine conversation, especially in the hands of the superb Swiss-born guitarist Christoph Denoth and the LSO under Jesús López-Cobos.

Denoth's own arrangement of Joaquín Malats's tuneful, ever-popular *Serenata española* (actually originally an orchestral piece before being arranged for piano and then solo guitar) is closer to the *Concierto de Aranjuez* in its economy of means and elegant colouristic flourishes, and makes for a satisfying encore or pendant to the previous two works. Throughout, Denoth again shows himself to be a thoughtful musician of considerable taste and technical prowess, and his recording of the Palomo suffers not one jot by comparison with that of the work's dedicatee, Pepé Romero.

The second recording under consideration sees the *Concierto de Aranjuez* in the company of *Concierto de Benicàssim*, the ninth of 11 guitar concertos by the prolific guitarist/composer Leo Brouwer. Just as interestingly, the other work featured is *Guitare*, Frank Martin's brilliant orchestration of his solo guitar suite *Quatre pièces brèves*.

As a whole, this recording makes for a more rounded listening experience than the above. The works are so different, yet still inspired by the same modest, six-stringed instrument. Where the Brouwer – a thrilling work that uses an amplified guitar and extended percussion passages which contrast with more elegiac episodes – fuses Spanish and Afro-Cuban elements, the Martin exhibits a certain Swiss coolness through which sudden gusts of warmer winds blow. Rodrigo's historicism and refinement of earthier elements is thus more pronounced, more appreciated, than it might be on other occasions.

Trápaga's playing is perhaps less assured than Denoth's but he is highly attuned to the different sound worlds of the Brouwer and the Rodrigo and, together with the Real Filharmonía de Galicia under Óliver Díaz, creates another kind of musical conversation that is vibrant, exciting and revealing in equal measure. **William Yeoman**

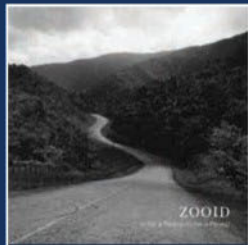
Palomo – selected comparison:

P Romero, Seville Royal SO, Frühbeck de Burgos
 (NAXO) 8 557135

'Overtures from the British Isles, Vol 2'

Ansell *Plymouth Hoe* **Bowen** *Fantasy Overture*, Op 115 **Coates** *The Merry-makers* **Foulds** *Le Cabaret*, Op 72a **Leigh** *Agincourt* (Jubilee Overture) **Mackenzie** *Britannia*, Op 52 **Parry** *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy* **Quilter** *A Children's Overture*, Op 17 **Smyth** *The*

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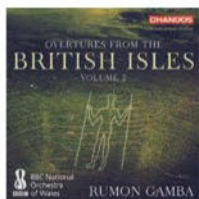
Anne-Sophie Mutter joins the Berlin Philharmonic for the orchestra's New Year's Eve celebrations, now released on DVD and Blu-ray

Boatswain's Mate - Overture **Walton**

Portsmouth Point

BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Rumon Gamba

Chandos © CHAN10898 (81' • DDD)



This most welcome second volume of British overtures serves to accentuate the sheer diversity of works this country produced in the genre between the 1890s and the 1940s and, moreover, where the lines of delineation between 'serious' and 'light' were blurred. Parry's somewhat brooding *Otello*-inspired *Overture to an Unwritten Tragedy* (1893) looks to Brahms for studied motivic process, though much of the *Schwung* of Parry's melodies and rich harmony is entirely his own. Gamba's reading is a spacious one, perhaps a little too slow at the opening, but the variations in tempo he develops throughout the overture are nevertheless persuasive.

There is a distinctly nautical theme among the choice of 10 works. The earliest of these is Mackenzie's quite masterly *Britannia* (1894), an orchestral *tour de force* of symphonically reworked themes. Ansell's *Plymouth Hoe* and Smyth's *The Boatswain's*

Mate (taken from her fourth opera), both attractive, melodious effusions, date from 1914, while Walton's *Portsmouth Point* (1924-25) is a gutsy performance in which the composer's characteristic rhythmic energy has a forceful élan. Bowen's vivacious *Fantasy Overture* of 1945, a premiere recording, has a similar sense of dynamism and skilfully incorporates Dibdin's famous 'Tom Bowling'.

Quilter's medley of children's nursery rhymes in *A Children's Overture* (1911-19) may be classed as 'light' music but its associations, sumptuous orchestration and subtle treatment have the power to conjure a bygone era of nostalgia and childhood innocence which has a genuine pathos. Eric Coates's *The Merry-makers* (1923) surely contains one of his most stirring melodies. The sweeping second subject is irresistible, as is the brilliance of the orchestral texture (vigorously played here too). The short comedy overture *Le Cabaret* (1921, rev 1934) gives us a taste of John Foulds in the lighter vein for which he became well known (rather than the more experimental serious works which were less frequently performed) and it is good to have a new recording of Walter Leigh's rousing 'Jubilee Overture' *Agincourt* (1935), which gives glimpses of the composer's affinity for a Hindemith-inspired

neo-classicism which can be found in his other works. What other riches, one wonders, will inhabit Vol 3? **Jeremy Dibble**

'Silvesterkonzert'



'New Year's Eve Concert 2015'

Brahms Hungarian Dance No 1 **Chabrier** L'étoile
- Overture **Massenet** Le Cid - Suite **Poulenc** Les
biches **Ravel** Tzigane^a. La valse **Saint-Saëns**
Introduction and Rondo capriccioso^a

^a**Anne-Sophie Mutter** *vn*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

EuroArts © DVD 206 1478; © Blu-ray 206 1474

(83' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin



Most of this concert, recorded live at the Berlin Philharmonie last New Year's Eve, is like being driven in the back seat of a top-of-the-range Mercedes along the autoroutes of France (with a brief final spin on an autobahn). Everything is so smooth, effortless, pleasingly comfortable, the engine purrs and the driver knows these roads well – he doesn't even have a map! We know that there will be no diversions down unknown roads tonight.

That said, the average Berliner of the sort that is happy to pay top dollar for a *Silvesterkonzert* may well be unfamiliar with Chabrier's Overture to his *opéra bouffe* *L'étoile*, but it is a reassuringly buoyant curtain-raiser. And then – oh, the glamour of it! – the striking figure of Anne-Sophie Mutter, the ultimate in sophistication (and allegedly the world's highest-paid soloist). Her performance of Saint-Saëns's evergreen showpiece is immaculate and, in the final pages, really quite exciting. Then there's the attractive yet strangely forgettable suite from Massenet's *Le Cid* before Anne-Sophie's return for a second perfectly executed performance – but surely Ravel's *Tzigane* should be more dangerous and mischievous than this fellow with exemplary manners? Poulenc next, and the Berlin players dress it in a sumptuous sugar coating (listen to the beguiling unison strings in the second movement of the suite from *Les biches*). After that, Ravel again. I can't remember another performance of *La valse* that was so carefree before the unsettling final pages when Rattle suddenly (and highly effectively) becomes first sinister and then hideously murderous. The all-French programme is rounded off with a German encore.

There are no separate tracks for the Massenet or Poulenc pieces. There is not a single word about any of the music or the composers or the artists, so anyone coming to it all for the first time will be left in the dark. Pity – it's just the kind of programme that might get a newcomer to classical music hooked. In the end, though, there is nothing remotely unmissable here and little one would want to return to repeatedly.

Jeremy Nicholas

'A Tribute to Hans Knappertsbusch'



Beethoven Overture 'Leonore No 3', Op 72a.

Piano Concerto No 4, Op 48^b Wagner Tristan und Isolde – Prelude and Liebestod^c. Die Walküre – Act 1^d

^aBirgit Nilsson, ^dClaire Watson *sops* ^dFritz Uhl *ten*

^dJosef Greindl *bass* ^bWilhelm Backhaus *pf* Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Hans Knappertsbusch

ArtHaus Musik © DVD 109 212; © Blu-ray 109 213

(152' • NTSC • 1080i • 4:3 • PCM mono • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Wiener Festwochen, Theater an der Wien, ^{abc}May 31, 1962, ^dMay 21, 1963

From TDK Mediactive DVD DV-CLH62 and

DVD DV-CLHK63 (7/04)



The two vintage Austrian Radio concert broadcasts combined and upgraded here – in vision and, perhaps, sound (no details) – were

originally on two TDK DVDs. On this 'new' reissue a brushing away of original period interference has achieved little startling for either picture or sound. ArtHaus has not taken the opportunity (which YouTube has on a clean upload of both concerts) to incorporate the subtly enlarged chamber-orchestral performance of the *Siegfried Idyll* that opened the 1963 concert. Nor has it edited out the motiveless mooning over the Theater an der Wien audience which fills time between items. The booklet-note gives no newer information than umpteenth-hand opinions of the conductor.

Nonetheless, I agree with Alan Blyth (writing in 2004) that these historic performances remain more golden than their ageing picture frames. For me this *Leonore* No 3 is neither 'pawky' nor 'undramatic' (as Blyth felt), rather a representative example of Knappertsbusch in the classics – 'slow' by the clock but free of the Rossini-like *crescendo*-ing introduced by some conductors performing it as an entr'acte during Act 2 of *Fidelio*. In the Concerto, enjoy the careful balancing of dynamics as Orpheus tames the Furies and the (surprisingly) light steering of the finale. The 78-year-old Backhaus's right hand lacks its touch of yesteryear which, combined with 'period' piano sound, can make for some uncomfortably trebly listening. The *Tristan* Prelude, characteristically shorn of Romantic over-anticipation, has a powerful climax magicked out of apparently nowhere while Nilsson, and ORF's balance engineers, take the greatest of care with her text.

The first half of *Die Walküre* Act 1 suits Knappertsbusch's grave spaciousness, a kind of blacker lower-life *Tristan*. But as soon as Josef Greindl's frightening Hunting has finished, grave spaciousness begins to feel like unexcited lethargy. Klemperer (Testament) may be slower and heavier but is everywhere sensual and more dramatic. Claire Watson – an admirable Marschallin and Ellen Orford – is backwards in coming forwards at conveying erotic emotion on the concert platform: there's little mystery in her uncovering of Siegmund's identity. Nor does Knappertsbusch allow his Wälsungs a real climax either at the peak of Sieglinde's 'Der Männer Sippe' or when Siegmund (an effective and more passionate Fritz Uhl) draws out the sword – although he puts a deal of ensemble-threatening energy into not getting faster as the act ends.

Overall, a reissue lily in need of more gilding. Mike Ashman

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Stars align for Warner

Eighteen years since EMI were on hand to record their last album together, a coupling of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata and the Franck Sonata captured live in Saratoga, **Itzhak Perlman** and **Martha Argerich** have joined forces for a new studio recording in Paris for Warner Classics. The repertoire consists of Bach's Violin Sonata No 4 in C minor BWV1017, Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* Op 73 and Brahms's Scherzo from the *F-A-E* Sonata. A performance of Schumann's Violin Sonata No 1, recorded in Saratoga in 1998 but never before released, will complete the album, which is due for release in the autumn.

• Pentatone News

Two of the audiophile label's artists to have received recent *Gramophone* Editor's Choices have been back in front of the microphones. Pianist **Denis Kozhukhin** (pictured) has recorded a recital of Brahms, including the *Fantasies* Op 116 and the



Ballades Op 10, while cellist **Johannes Moser** has set down a programme of works by Rachmaninov and Prokofiev with the pianist **Andrei Korobeinikov**. Both discs were recorded in the Muziekcentrum van de Omroep in Hilversum in the Netherlands. In Frankfurt, meanwhile, **Andrés Orozco-Estrada** has recorded a disc of Beethoven, Symphonies Nos 7 and 8, with the **Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra**.

• Choral music from HM

Stile Antico have recorded a programme of early motets by the Franco-Flemish composer Giaches de Wert at All Hallows, Gospel Oak for Harmonia Mundi. **La Nuova Musica** were joined by soprano **Lucy Crowe** and countertenor **Tim Mead** to set down a programme of Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* and Bach's Cantatas BWV54 and 170. Release dates are yet to be confirmed.

Gilbert & Sullivan's HMS Pinafore

Conductor **Richard Egarr** and Jeremy Nicholas discuss the authentic way to perform G&S

‘There is so much we can learn from listening to old piano recordings – Carl Reinecke, Saint-Saëns, Cortot, Rachmaninov. It’s something I encourage all my students to do.’ This is how Richard Egarr enthusiastically begins our conversation. Hang on! We’re supposed to be talking about his new Linn recording of *HMS Pinafore*! Well, as Egarr makes clear during the interview, old recordings are by no means as irrelevant to the project as you might think.

HMS Pinafore, or *The Lass that Loved a Sailor*, was Gilbert and Sullivan’s fourth collaboration, though neither *Thespis*, *Trial by Jury* or *The Sorcerer* approached the wild success of this, their first international hit. It opened at the Opera Comique theatre just off the Strand on May 25, 1878, and enjoyed an initial run of 571 performances before its numerous subsequent West End revivals. Who has not at some point seen a production of *Pinafore* or taken part in one? Numbers like ‘I’m called Little Buttercup’, ‘I am the Captain of the *Pinafore*’, ‘When I was a lad I served a term’ and ‘He is an Englishman!’ are part of the fabric.

On the surface it may seem surprising that its latest incarnation on disc should be directed by a man more usually associated with the world of early music or his role as a renowned harpsichordist. Richard Egarr demurs. This most amiable and articulate of conductors has an omnivorous musical diet. ‘People who know me know that I have very broad musical tastes. Now I haven’t done any G&S since I was at school but when you come down to it, it is fantastic theatre. It is exceptionally well-crafted with a fabulous text, in the same way as Purcell’s *The Fairy Queen* or *King Arthur*.’

The idea for doing *Pinafore* came as a result of Egarr having recorded Bach’s *St John Passion* with the Academy of Ancient Music (a recording shortlisted for a *Gramophone* Award in 2014). Over a meal after the sessions, Egarr, producer Philip Hobbs and AMM’s administrator Andrew Moore agreed that the *Passion*’s soloists, who included Elizabeth Watts, James Gilchrist and Christopher Purves, would ‘make a perfect G&S cast’. When Moore moved to become Artistic Administrator of the Edinburgh Festival in 2014 and wanted to do G&S with Scottish Opera, he knew who to ask. ‘When we started casting,’ says Egarr, ‘we used a lot of people who had been in the *St John Passion* and a lot of early-music people who I had enjoyed working with in the past.’ I ask if any of them had sung G&S before? Egarr isn’t exactly sure. ‘I suspect so. Being



Egarr conducts (L-R) John Mark Ainsley, Andrew Foster-Williams and Elizabeth Watts

a very English cast, I suspect most of them had.’ Had he conducted any G&S before? ‘No. No!’

We have before us the full score in the sumptuous 2003 edition published by Broude Brothers. It comes with a similarly weighty Commentary volume. I suspect that most people would be as astonished as me to discover in the latter’s 200 pages the teeming number of textual and musical changes made to the operetta over the years in different editions. (All the spoken dialogue in the new recording, by the way, has been replaced by a narration, Tim Brooke-Taylor reprising his role in a 2005 BBC Prom with Sir Charles Mackerras.)

How did Egarr go about preparing for the recording? ‘One of the first things I do is to get hold of all the recordings I can – there are some very early recordings of G&S, two from 1907, for instance. I was very keen to encourage the Scottish Opera Orchestra strings to basically slide around as much as possible and apply the aesthetics of *rubato* which were prevalent at the end of the 19th century, even in the Overture. Look at the oboe solo at bar 52 [marked *Andante*] which I wanted to be flexible, rather than rigid as it so often is in modern performances. Incidentally, there is a general performance tradition these days of playing those kind of accompanimental quavers under the oboe quite short and detached – and that’s not the way it should be done. It should



The historical view

WS Gilbert

From a curtain-call speech on opening night of HMS Pinafore at Fifth Avenue Theater (the first US performance to use the full orchestration by Sullivan, pictured) in 1879

‘It has been our purpose to produce something that should be innocent but not imbecile.’

HL Mencken

Baltimore Evening Sun, 1911

‘No other comic opera ever written – no other stage play, indeed, of any sort – was ever so popular...[it] has been given, and with great success, wherever there are theaters – from Moscow to Buenos Aires...’

The Times

London, November 1932

‘Its mechanical “denouement” lends to a poor finale; and even the finale to the First Act is not of the first order. But as a whole it is a picturesque opera, with at any rate one first-rate song.’

be more on the string. Even something as mundane as the opening canon shot [bar 4]. On virtually every recording you hear, you have the timp roll, then a downbeat on bar 3, and bar 4 is precisely where bar 4 should be – ie the canon shot on the bass drum. Now if you listen to how we did it, I give you the timp roll, then I extend the rest so that you don't know there's a canon shot coming. It should be a surprise.

'Another example is the Captain's aria in the Second Act where he accompanies himself on the mandolin. Now, some of my favourite Mozart recordings are Adelina Patti, Battistini and Chaliapin. Listen to Battistini's "Deh, vieni all finestra", the mandolin aria from *Don Giovanni*. Sullivan's aria is a homage to the Mozart. Because it's very high – it's in D major, which is no coincidence because "Deh, vieni" is also in D major – one of the things that's often done in the *Pinafore* aria is to transpose it down to C major. But I wanted Andrew Foster-Williams to exhibit the same kind of flexibility you hear in Patti and Battistini. You listen to almost every recording of "Voi che sapete" [from *The Marriage of Figaro*] – it's rigid, it's metronomic and that's wrong.'

'In the early recordings, there is utter commitment from the singers. Comedy is a serious thing!' – Richard Egarr

I note that he also allows Josephine in 'Never mind the why and wherefore' (Act 2) to take a little *tenuto* on her entry at bar 104. 'Yes – and the last time she sings "And a tar that ploughs the water"...the colour that she [Elizabeth Watts] gets on that is so naughty. Those little bits of flexibility are so important.'

I wonder if Egarr had consciously eschewed everything from the D'Oyly Carte performance tradition. 'Well, as Toscanini famously said, "Tradition is only the last bad performance". There are so many different traditions associated with this piece because it was so popular. That's why the critical edition of the score is so massive because there are so many different published versions, with things being added or taken away as the show developed. But the one thing I got from listening to those very early recordings is that there is never anything arch or cod. They sing it with utter commitment – just as they would a Puccini aria. Even with the comedy roles. Comedy is a serious thing! And you can see Sullivan was an absolute Mozart worshipper in Josephine's final aria ['The hours creep on apace...A simple sailor'] by the way he uses the orchestra with a very light scoring, just as Mozart would have done.'

I note the way Egarr sometimes accelerates into the final bar before a verse, and then again in the last bars at the end of a number. 'Yes. That's what they used to do. You get that from listening to old recordings. Another thing that is very important to me in this music – and any music with voices – is the use of language. Pronunciation has become extremely lazy, so you might notice that Hilary Summers as Buttercup is pronouncing all of her final "rs" and making the words incredibly clear – which was just part of stagecraft and singing right through to the 1950s. Listen to Alfred Deller. He will not only pronounce the final "r" but sometimes roll it. You need that clarity in a big hall. That's just how people used the language. Again, you can hear that in all the old recordings.'

► To read Gramophone's review of HMS Pinafore turn to page 93

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Harriet Smith on an impressive debut from Trio Karénine:

'They capture the upward-surfing opening of the first movement and the thrilling élan of its close' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**

Adès · Nørgård · Abrahamsen

Abrahamsen String Quartet No 1, '10 Preludes'

Adès Arcadiana, Op 12 Nørgård String Quartet No 1, 'Quartetto breve'

Danish Quartet

ECM New Series © 481 2385 (47' • DDD)



Though recorded five months earlier, this disc closely resembles a concert the Danish

Quartet gave in October, marking the beginning of Thomas Adès's Sonning Prize residency in Copenhagen. Out goes the highly reactive performance of Adès's Piano Quintet (with the composer on keys) and in comes Per Nørgård's little *Quartetto breve*, which makes a useful central pivot in a mirror-like programme where Adès's *Arcadiana* reflects Abrahamsen's *10 Preludes* and vice versa.

Both the longer pieces present lessons in how to be disciplined with your material: Adès and Abrahamsen set themselves rigorous tasks and fulfil them as simply and as briefly as possible (which doesn't mean the results are either simple or brief). *Arcadiana* looks at the same material as if through seven different twists of a kaleidoscope. In *10 Preludes*, each movement looks backwards to its predecessor and forwards to its successor, arriving at a C major Classical pastiche that 'sorts out the loose ends' (Abrahamsen).

10 Preludes is something of a petri dish, a touchstone for the composer himself who has returned to it for technical and thematic inspiration since 1973. Its 'étude' footing (in a materialistic sense) shows, but the music is both energetic and extremely careful; the ninth prelude operates almost entirely on a unison but winds up among the most complex and fascinating.

I have reservations about *Arcadiana*, only because it shows how far Adès has come (since 1993) when viewed against a more recent masterpiece such as *In Seven Days*, which in a sense has the same goal but

achieves more with less. Per Nørgård doesn't look at the same object multiple times in his *Quartetto breve*; instead his piece from 1952 foreshadows his tapping of that Sibelian meta-flow which would deliver such powerful symphonies some years later. He explores a bunch of varied textures and themes along the way, but each arrives on its own terms. The Danish Quartet are more sepia-toned in *Arcadiana* than the Calder Quartet on their recent Signum recording, and the approach works. Elsewhere, the Danish are remarkable, as ever – capable of intense blend, extreme dynamic variation (in which they seem glued together), perfect intonation even on harmonics, and constant vitality and flow.

Andrew Mellor

Adès – selected comparison:

Calder Qt (7/15) (SIGN) SIGCD413

Berg · Schoenberg · Webern G

'Complete Works for String Quartet'

Berg String Quartet, Op 3. Lyric Suite^a

Schoenberg String Quartets – No 1, Op 7; No 2, Op 10^b; No 3, Op 30; No 4, Op 37; in D (1897).

Presto. Scherzo (1897) Webern String Quartets – Op 28; 1905. Six Bagatelles, Op 9^c. Langsamer Satz^c. Five Movements, Op 5. Rondo (1906)

Diotima Quartet with ^bSandrine Piau sop

^aMarie-Nicole Lemieux contr

Naïve © © V5380 (4h 50' • DDD)

^{abc}From V5240 (8/11)



Judging a book by its cover is rightly frowned upon, but you can sure tell a lot

about a string quartet by their given name. If you'd expect the Ligeti Quartet to observe a different world view from the Amadeus Quartet, then 'Quatuor Diotima' feels like a determined statement of intent from a young Paris-based group who hear possible futures for the string quartet emerging out of German Romanticism. Friedrich Hölderlin's poem *Hyperion* co-opted the character Diotima from Plato's *Symposium*, and Luigi Nono's 1980

quartet *Fragmente – Stille, an Diotima* embedded quotes from Hölderlin into a score that floated the light-touch textures of Anton Webern's pellucid late-period string quartets towards a music which hovered on the very brink of not being there. Quatuor Diotima have previously recorded modern composition ranging from Reich and Crumb to Lachenmann, Nono and Dieter Schnebel; but the complete string quartet music of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg clearly connects the Diotimas with some core concerns – who they are as musicians and from where those instincts might spring.

A disc's worth of this material has been available before. In 2011, the Diotimas released Schoenberg's String Quartet No 2 (with soprano Sandrine Piau) in a set alongside Berg's *Lyric Suite* and Webern's Six Bagatelles, Op 9, their performance of the Berg incorporating the recently discovered vocal version of the last movement, while their Webern presented a whole new seventh bagatelle (with voice) which the composer withdrew, fearing it wasn't up to spec (he was wrong). The triumvirate of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg has proved the steadfast yardstick by which later cycles of quartets by the likes of Carter, Ferneyhough and Dillon have been measured; and with Schoenberg's psychoactive String Quartet No 1 and his more emotionally measured Third and Fourth Quartets and the complete quartet music of Webern and Berg now included, a whole bunch of questions emerges about what this body of work represents and how it could be interpreted.

Quatuor Diotima couldn't play an affected, emotionally over-ripened note if they tried. Their vision of Second Viennese School aesthetics views the backdrop of Romanticism – Brahms, Wagner, Mahler et al – as a starting-shot rather than a point of reference to be dwelt over too obsessively. When the LaSalle Quartet recorded their cycle back in the 1970s, their position as the house-string quartet of European modernism, the group with whom Ligeti worked and who cut the



Leonidas Kavakos is 'at the top of his game' in a recital of virtuoso showpieces (review page 55)

premiere recording of Nono's *Fragmente – Stille* bled into their approach, to Webern especially. Then fast forward 10 years and the Arditti Quartet kill the emotionally volatile expressionism of Schoenberg stone dead, their clinical micromanagement dating very badly.

All of which opens up an interpretative vacuum that Quatuor Diotima eagerly fill. The opening disc featuring Schoenberg's string quartet juvenilia – especially his String Quartet in D major, which pitches up somewhere between Schumann and Dvořák, and the equivalent moment in Webern's development, including his *Langsamer Satz* and 1905 String Quartet – are absolutely not treated as mere staging posts towards mature masterworks. Listening to their articulate reading of Webern's transitionary Five Movements, Op 5, filled me with renewed wonder: for the piece itself, yes, but also at the thought that a lesser composer kissed with the spirit of Romanticism might have been tempted to expand towards an ever-larger canvas. But, at the very moment Webern is presenting material in the opening movement, he compacts it to the point where basic sonata form is always about to

fracture. An abstracted torso survives. And never have I heard that conceptual oxymoron expressed so tellingly.

That opening disc of early Schoenberg serves up a tasty enough entrée, but the set fully comes to life with the account of his First String Quartet. I know what the history books say – that, following *Verklärte Nacht* (1899), Schoenberg's String Quartet No 1 (1905) represents his first fully fledged proto-modernist work. Until now I didn't fully believe it; but Quatuor Diotima demand a rethink. As the residue of Wagnerian Romanticism is driven head first into expressionistic urgency, a flexible ribbon of unfolding structure struggles to contain its nervous impulses. The Second Quartet deftly runs towards Schoenberg's ultimate break with tonality almost casually; the Third and Fourth Quartets, about which even hardcore Schoenbergians can blow hot and cold, are elevated beyond the arid note-picking that one too often hears. Has anyone ever unearthed such soulful splendour in the *Largo* from String Quartet No 4?

A plain Berg String Quartet, Op 3, is a slight weak link, perhaps; but their *Lyric Suite* is another performance that obliges you to reassess something entirely familiar.

An almost implausible attention to shifting nuances of timbre and harmonic weight is counterpointed against an air of improvisational freedom – sounds liberated, rather than held to account, by Berg's notational overkill. **Philip Clark**

Complete String Quartets – selected comparison:
LaSalle Qt (11/71^R, 4/88^R) (DG) 479 1976GB6

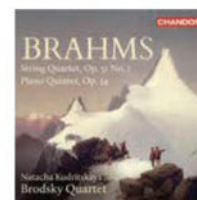
Brahms

String Quartet No 1, Op 51 No 1.

Piano Quintet, Op 34^a

^aNatacha Kudritskaya pf Brodsky Quartet

Chandos © CHAN10892 (77' • DDD)



This pairing of the C minor Quartet and Piano Quintet comes a couple of years after the Brodsky's first disc of Brahms for Chandos, an altogether more mellow coupling of the Second Quartet and the Clarinet Quintet. And immediately one gets the feeling that some of that mellowness remains: these are performances that are not afraid to relax, which don't insist on maintaining

a constant tension to keep the pieces taut and together.

There's an almost tentative quality to the opening of the quartet (certainly compared to the big-boned statements of, say, the Artemis Quartet on their recent disc) and arguably some will miss the assertiveness of the German quartet, or even of the Ebène on their identical coupling; the Brodskys, following first violin Daniel Rowland's lead, often favour a nervous swell-and-contract expressiveness instead of those ensembles' broader, more confident lyrical flow.

As such, although there are plenty of lovely details in the outer movements, where the playing is never less than intelligent and instinctive, I miss a sense of powerful forward thrust, a feeling emphasised by the occasional tendency to drop down a notch in tempo. The Romanze, however, receives an exquisite performance (listen to the way Rowland soars up his phrase at 2'26" for a taster of the bittersweet lyricism he and his colleagues achieve); and though others offer a greater sense of tension in the *Allegretto*, the Brodsky's more muted approach is effective there, too.

The playing in the Quintet is similar and matched well by that of Natacha Kudritskaya, who plays very much as part of the team, even to the point of seeming a touch anonymous and unassertive. It's an approach that makes a fascinating contrast to more conventionally forceful and richly drawn accounts. Admittedly I miss the full sound of, say, Andsnes and the Artemis or Akiko Yamamoto with the Ebène (not to mention the austere forcefulness of Pollini and the Quartetto Italiano), in the driven passages of the Scherzo, for example, or in that lovely burst of lyricism in the *Andante*, which feels underplayed here (tr 6, at 7'20"). But there are benefits in the more reflective passages, in the touching phrasing and the details that emerge in the texture.

Kudritskaya's Steinway sounds a little constricted in tone, despite the clear and realistic engineering. But the observance of dynamics is unusually accurate throughout, and the group certainly capture both works' moments of nervous tension well.

Hugo Shirley

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Yamamoto, Ebène Qt (A/09) (ERAT) 216622-2

Piano Quintet – selected comparison:

Andsnes, Artemis Qt (A/07) (VIRG/ERAT) 395143-2

String Quartet No 1 – selected comparison:

Artemis Qt (10/15) (ERAT) 2564 61266-3

Chopin • Franchomme

'A mon ami'

Chopin Cello Sonata, Op 65. Introduction and

Polonaise brillante, Op 3 **Chopin/Franchomme** Grand Duo on Themes from Meyerbeer's 'Robert le diable' **Franchomme** Three Themes with Variations, Op 22 **Franchomme/Osborne** Gran Duo on a Motif from Donizetti's 'Anna Bolena', Op 23

Beatriz Blanco vc **Federico Bosco** pf

Odradek © ODRCD327 (75' • DDD)



The two works Chopin wrote for cello and piano at either end of his career are here

placed in reverse order of composition, with the *Grand duo concertante* positioned in the middle. The latter was written in 1833 in collaboration with Chopin's close friend Auguste Franchomme (1808-84), to whom he dedicated his Op 65 Sonata (hence the disc's title). Franchomme, the leading cellist of his day, who died of a massive heart attack just four days after receiving the Légion d'honneur, also rewrote the cello part of Op 3 and produced a number of transcriptions of Chopin's works.

It is not these that Beatriz Blanco and Federico Bosco have chosen as the conventional makeweights of this programme but two of Franchomme's own (rarely heard) compositions. His *Three Themes with Variations* takes an air by Donizetti, another by Beethoven and a third by Bellini, and presents a short series of variations on each (4'41", 4'24" and 5'43" respectively), attractive, undemanding (for the listener, not the player) and quite unmemorable. Much better is his *Duo concertant sur un motif d'Anna Bolena*, using another of Donizetti's melodies and written in collaboration with the Irish composer-pianist George Osborne (1806-93). If you like Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata or Vieuxtemps's more virtuosic writing for the instrument, then Franchomme is sure to appeal.

Blanco and Bosco are an ideal match (as were the reserved, refined Chopin and Franchomme). Blanco's unforced, burnished tone is a joy to hear, underpinned by Bosco's quirky choice of an 1898 Pleyel double piano (two pianos housed in one body, each with its own set of strings and pedals). The plus sides of this are the piquant colours on offer and the jaunty, almost percussive edge it gives to certain sections of the Meyerbeer and *Anna Bolena* pieces; the downsides are some exposed solo passages at *forte* and above when the Pleyel sounds like a straight-strung pub piano – not enough to spoil one's enjoyment of the polished, understated music-making but enough

to take your mind off the musical flow for a moment. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Debussy • Elgar • Respighi

Debussy Violin Sonata **Elgar** Violin Sonata,

Op 82 **Respighi** Violin Sonata

Sibelius Berceuse, Op 79 No 6

James Ehnes vn **Andrew Armstrong** pf

Onyx © ONYX4159 (69' • DDD)



Is James Ehnes capable of making a sound that isn't beautiful? If

you've been following

his career you'll already have your own answer to that. If you haven't, try from about 5'25" into tr 9: a passage of repose in Respighi's mountainous passacaglia, played by Ehnes with such liquid sweetness and unforced expression that you might find yourself listening to it over and over again. Or take the beginning of the finale of Elgar's Violin Sonata to hear how subtly Ehnes shades and shapes a line – and how pianist Andrew Armstrong makes it glow.

Those are merely examples: this programme of First World War-era violin sonatas is about much more than just ravishing sounds. Ehnes and Armstrong are intensely communicative duo partners and both can draw on a limitless palette of colours. They've chosen to bring out the darker facets of these three troubled works, charging the Debussy with a nervous energy that doesn't prevent either player from responding to its Harlequin-like mood-shifts.

Their Elgar breaks open the romantic surface; and finds an unexpected kinship with Debussy in the interrupted serenade of the Romance – the interplay between the two players here is fantastical and profoundly tender. But they can shape long paragraphs too: listen to how the first movement of the Respighi ebbs to a close (from about 7'00" onwards). The Sibelius encore is both exquisite and perfectly appropriate.

If I've any reservation at all about this disc, it's that these two superb artists feel at all times in complete control of the music: you occasionally miss the sense of abandon that you get from Kyung Wha Chung (or, in the Elgar, Lydia Mordkovitch). But you never doubt that everything that Ehnes and Armstrong have to say – and they ask more questions than they answer – comes from deep within the music. These are performances to return to. **Richard Bratby**

Respighi – selected comparison:

Chung, Zimmerman (2/90) (DG)

457 907-2GGA or 478 7611DB20



Sweetness and style: James Ehnes and Andrew Armstrong perform Romantic sonatas by Debussy, Elgar and Respighi

Debussy – selected comparison:

Chung, Lupu (1/89) (DECC) 421 154-2DM,

460 006-2DM, 478 7611DB20 or 478 8772DB28

Elgar – selected comparison:

Mordkovich, Milford (8/98) (CHAN) CHAN9624

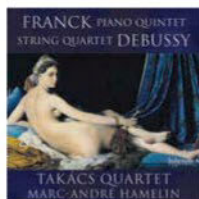
Franck • Debussy

Debussy String Quartet, Op 10

Franck Piano Quintet^a

^a**Marc-André Hamelin pf Takács Quartet**

Hyperion © CDA68061 (62' • DDD)



When the seasoned artistry of the Takács Quartet blends with the thoughtful

brilliance of Marc-André Hamelin, a rare alchemy occurs. Their fruitful collaboration on record goes back to a 2009 Schumann Quintet (11/09), with a Shostakovich Quintet released last year (5/15). Their new recording of Franck's Piano Quintet, one of the glories of the 19th-century French chamber repertory, stands comparison with some of the best, including Curzon/Vienna Philharmonic, Richter/Borodin and Cortot/International (formerly EMI).

The Quartet casts down the gauntlet with an implacably assertive opening statement in the Franck, setting the stage for an Orpheus-and-the-Furies-style dialogue with the piano. It's a compelling approach to a movement that, on occasion, can become an uncertain, diffuse prologue to the main event of the *Lento* and *Allegro non troppo*. But what begins as a dialogue between strings and piano soon becomes a discourse among five musicians, urgently argued with lacerating intensity. The cohesion brought to this emotional caldron, one feels, could only be the result of complete unity of purpose shared by five musical minds.

Embarking on the slow movement brings almost visceral relief, even knowing that the lyric narrative about to unfold is one of the saddest in the literature. Delicacy and finesse produce colours and textures as vividly beautiful as they are emotionally impactful. But as much as we might like to linger in this sensual melancholy, in less than no time we're swept up on to the magic-carpet ride of the finale, where kinetic exhilaration fuels the kaleidoscopic flight over varied terrain. I'm not sure I've had another experience of this work that imparts its affective essence so authentically while keeping its architectural ingenuity and grace always in view.

To Debussy's luminous and under-appreciated String Quartet of 1893 the Takács bring all their intelligence, skill, taste and virtuosity. While every measure of this performance affords pleasure, the pizzicato shower of the scherzo and the touching tenderness of the *Andantino* are special treats. Very highly recommended.

Patrick Rucker

Franck – selected comparisons:

Curzon, Vienna Philb Qt (9/61^R, 4/90^R, 1/04, 6/13)

(DECC) 475 0842DC4 or 478 4389DB24

Richter, Borodin Qt (11/91^R) (DECC) 478 6778DC51

Handel

'Trio Sonatas for Two Violins and Basso continuo'

Sinfonia, HWV339. Trio Sonatas – HWV50a; HWV386a; HWV392; HWV393; HWV394; HWV403

The Brook Street Band

Avie © AV2357 (76' • DDD)



Having made enjoyable recordings of the Op 2 (c1731) and Op 5 (1739)

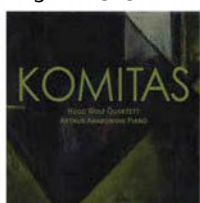
collections of trio sonatas, it makes perfect sense for The Brook Street Band to complete the job by recording the three additional trio sonatas by Handel that are certifiably authentic but which were not published during his lifetime.

The quartet of Rachel Harris and Farran Scott (violins), Tatty Theo (cello) and Carolyn Gibley (harpichord) play with sensual directness and a vividly attuned awareness of harmonic contours in the early F major Sonata (HWV392), which might have been written either in Hamburg in about 1706 or in Italy soon afterwards; the sudden interruption into dramatically expressive descending chromatic dissonances at the end of the second movement is dramatically weighted, and the convivial final *Allegro* is performed with the ideal juxtaposition of crispness and fulsome sonorities. The Sonata in C minor (HWV386a) was probably written in about 1717-19 while Handel was a guest of the Earl of Carnarvon at Cannons, and the sublime *Andante* is a sweet reworking of an aria that appears in several of his Italian-period works (notably Ottone's 'Vaghe fonti' in *Agrippina*). Best of all is the large-scale Sonata in C major (HWV403), which dates from around the same time as the musical material's appearance in the oratorio *Saul* (1739).

Despite being one of Handel's best chamber compositions, this gets somewhat ignored by recording artists so it is pleasing to hear The Brook Street Band's shapely account; the autograph manuscript is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, so I'm puzzled that Tatty Theo's booklet-note says that there are no autographs of any of the pieces on this recording. Moreover, the note overstates its advocacy of the undoubtedly spurious Sonata in E major (HWV394) and the contested Sonata in G minor (HWV393) – but there is nothing to quibble over in The Brook Street Band's masterly performances. **David Vickers**

Komitas

Seven Songs^a. Seven Dances^a. Al Ayloughs^b.
Chinar Es^b. Garun A^b. Haberman^b. Hoy Nazan^b.
Kagavi Yerg^b. Kele-Kele^b. Keler Tsoler^b.
Khoumar^b. Krounk^b. Shoger Djan^b. Shoushiki^b.
Vagharshapati Par^b. Yerkinqn Ampel A^b
^aArthur Aharonyan *pf* ^bHugo Wolf Quartet
Megadisc ® ② MDC785 (64' • DDD)



It's easy to view Komitas's life and music through the prism of tragedy.

The Armenian musician and monk was one of 291 prominent figures who, in April 1915, were rounded up and deported to a prison camp by the Ottoman government. Although he was eventually released, he spent the last 20 years of his life in various psychiatric hospitals. Now his music – while mostly pre-dating these events – is widely regarded as a symbol of the Armenian genocide and Komitas himself as a martyr.

But he was more than that: someone who could transform the simplest folksongs of Armenia and Turkey into sophisticated European polyphony. And, in so doing, he invented a new national school of composition. Allegedly, after a 1906 concert, Claude Debussy knelt and kissed Komitas's right hand, saying, 'You're a genius, Holy Father.'

Listening to this double-disc set one can see his point. Each of these song transcriptions reveals haunting music, all the more so for its very strangeness. We hear stops and starts, drones overlaid with circling, hypnotic melodies – the trappings of folk. We hear a Brahmsian waltz in 'Shoushiki'; a Debussian grasp of colour most obviously in 'Kele-Kele'; and that mastery of polyphony dignifying a simple song such as 'Het u Aradi'. Pinning it all together, though, is an emotional rawness: these are pieces that get you in the gut. And, bar one or two exceptions, they are deeply mournful.

The Hugo Wolf Quartet are equal to this chameleonic music: listen to how nimbly they transition from 'Haberman', a robust work that begins much like Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole*, to the bare, folk-drenched world of 'Keler Tsoler'. But it's the piano music that leaves the deepest mark, showcasing the glossy sound of Arthur Aharonyan. His is an understated approach, highlighting the works' fragility. More importantly, it's an approach that allows space to breathe, demonstrating that, in this music, the silences carry as much weight as the notes.

Hannah Nepil

Reger

'Complete Music for Clarinet and Piano'
Clarinet Sonatas – Op 49 Nos 1 & 2; Op 107.
Albumblatt, WoO II/13. Tarantella, WoO II/12
Alan R Kay *cl* **Jon Klibonoff** *pf*
Bridge ® BRIDGE9461 (72' • DDD)

Reger

'Complete Music for Clarinet and Piano'
Clarinet Sonatas – Op 49 Nos 1 & 2; Op 107.
Albumblatt, WoO II/13. Tarantella, WoO II/12
Claudio Conti *cl* **Roberta Bambace** *pf*
Brilliant ® 95258 (70' • DDD)



'Like Grandma's oatmeal, Reger is good for you in some unspecified way but difficult to digest.' Phil Salathé's witty note for Bridge's disc of clarinet sonatas sums up the feelings of many towards the music of Max Reger. Littered with hemiolas which lead to rhythmic instability, the long-breathed melodies are full of chromatic twists and turns. It's knotty, like gnarled Brahms. Reger's two Op 49 sonatas were penned in just three weeks, in the spring of 1900, while Op 107 – what the composer mockingly called his 'new crime against harmony and counterpoint' – was written in 1909.

The clarinet sonatas bring out Reger's lyrical side and nod to his profound reverence for Brahms (he supposedly died with a portrait of the older composer in his hands). All three fit neatly on a single disc, and two new, identically programmed offerings compete for the attention of Regerphiles this year, the centenary of his death.

Alan R Kay, for Bridge, doesn't present the best case for the Op 49 works. He isn't helped by the recording, but there is a limited dynamic range to his playing, with little variation between *ff* and *pp*. Reger marks the final phrases of the *Vivace* of the A flat Sonata (Op 49 No 1) *ppp*, but you wouldn't know it. Kay's playing veers towards the bland and under-characterised. He is stronger in the autumnal air of the B flat Sonata (Op 107), particularly the sombre melancholy of the *Adagio*. Jon Klibonoff is hampered by a limp piano sound – not unlike a fortepiano but with muddy bass.

On Brilliant Classics, Claudio Conti plays with far greater conviction and passion. He takes the A flat Sonata's *Larghetto* at a flowing pace. Reger marks the movement *Larghetto (ma non troppo, un poco con moto)* but in Kay's recording there is little sense of movement at all. Conti plays with a sense of engagement and flair. His rich, dark sound suits the muscular *Allegro dolente* that opens the F sharp minor Sonata (Op 49 No 2). Unfortunately he is hamstrung throughout, not by Roberta Bambace's alert playing but by the tinny piano, which lacks bass presence. Hamstrung Reger is even harder to love.

Mark Pullinger



London Symphony Orchestra
LSO Live

Rachmaninov

All-Night Vigil (Vespers)

Simon Halsey

London Symphony Chorus

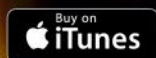
'The London Symphony Chorus and conductor, Simon Halsey, expertly realised Rachmaninov's technical composition with energy and passion.'

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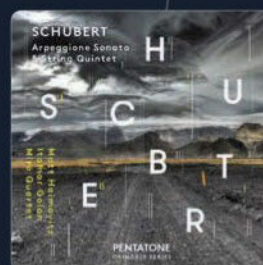
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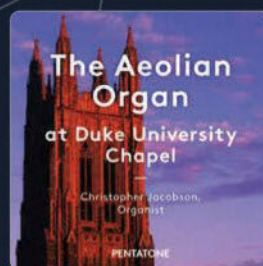
SCHUBERT: ARPEGGIONE SONATA & STRING QUINTET
Matt Haimovitz, Itamar Golan, Miró Quartet

PTC 5186232



SCHUBERT: STRING QUARTETS
Quartetto Italiano

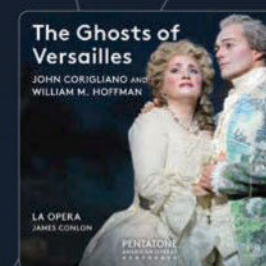
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Christopher Jacobson

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THE GHOSTS OF VERSAILLES
Patricia Racette, Christopher Maltman, LA Opera, James Conlon

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DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN
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Reich

Mallet Quartet. Sextet. Nagoya
Marimbas. Music for Pieces of Wood
Third Coast Percussion
Cedille Ⓢ CDR90000 161 (62' • DDD)



Steve Reich's music is often at its most effective when he writes for

different combinations of percussion and/or piano, often set out symmetrically on stage in opposing pairs. This form of contemporary chamber music – unique in many ways to Reich – foregrounds some of its most important stylistic elements: rhythmic and melodic counterpoint; the combination and layering of interlocking patterns; and, most importantly, the dynamic interplay and subtle shifts in balance that are required collectively from the ensemble to best achieve these effects.

It is this last element that proves a stumbling block for some performances of Reich's music. Third Coast Percussion get it absolutely right here. Consider, for example, the five-movement *Sextet* (1984) for percussion and keyboards, which has become something of a 1980s Reich classic. Third Coast take the first movement at a slightly steadier pace than the original recording by Steve Reich and Musicians (Nonesuch, 8/88) and certainly more slowly than Contempoartensemble under Danilo Grassi (Arts Music, 2002), who race through the opening chord cycle at such speed that the music's rhythmic subtleties are largely lost.

Third Coast's more considered approach allows them to dig deeper into *Sextet's* dark, almost threatening undertow. A sense of urgency and immediacy is still maintained, however, and the transitions between each movement are well coordinated. The same level of care is evident in the more recent *Mallet Quartet* (2009) with imaginative blending of colours, dramatic dynamic thrusts and sudden contrasts especially evident during the work's final movement. The intuitive rhythmic empathy between players that's key in performing Reich's music is also evident in the lighter *Nagoya Marimbas* (1994) and more radical, earlier *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973) for five pairs of tuned claves. The recording itself would have benefited from a slightly more resonant acoustic but overall this is a really impressive Reich debut from Third Coast Percussion.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Schumann

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 63; No 2, Op 80
Karénine Trio
Mirare Ⓢ MIR311 (56' • DDD)



The Trio Karénine were joint winners (with the Van Baerle Trio) of the 2013

ARD Competition in Munich. They formed as recently as 2009 and the choice of Schumann for their first disc is a bold one. There's an effervescence and litheness that underpins their approach (not for nothing are they named after Tolstoy's heroine Anna Karenina, 'for the life force she represents').

The Second Trio suits them particularly well. They capture the upward-surfing opening of the first movement and the thrilling élan of its close. Yet they don't underplay the contrasting elements either, for instance, the confiding theme introduced by the piano at 0'50" (tr 5). In the second movement they know better than to overindulge Schumann's rapturous main theme, though Andsnes's magically withdrawn accompaniment for the Tetzlaff siblings is even more rapt. The lolling intermezzo-like third movement, with its canonic conversation between strings and piano, is also very effective, while the finale is a particularly elated affair, the Karénine palpably delighting in Schumann's flow of melodic invention; their lively sense of interplay and the springiest of accentuation gives even the sparkily multi-hued account by Faust/Queyras/Melnikov a run for its money.

The turbulent First Trio is also full of good things, though I marginally prefer the slightly steadier tempo of Tetzlaff/Andsnes in the gruff Scherzo, giving it a darker hue that then makes the most telling contrast with the Trio. In the slow movement, it is Faust et al who delve deepest, the most sparing use of vibrato giving it a desolation compared to which Trio Karénine are more conventionally beautiful. But the new group convey the energy of the finale with great immediacy, combining a sense of freshness with a deep-seated understanding of Schumann's world. A most impressive debut.

Harriet Smith

Trios Nos 1 and 2 – selected comparison:

C & T Tetzlaff, Andsnes (7/11) (EMI) 094180-2

Trio No 1 – selected comparison:

Faust, Queyras, Melnikov (5/16) (HARM) HMC90 2197

Trio No 2 – selected comparison:

Faust, Queyras, Melnikov (9/15) (HARM) HMC90 2198

'British Violin Sonatas, Vol 2'

Bliss Violin Sonata, F192 Bridge Violin Sonata, H39 Ireland Violin Sonata No 1 W Lloyd Webber
The Gardens at Eastwell Vaughan Williams
Two Pieces
Tasmin Little *vn* Piers Lane *pf*
Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10899 (66' • DDD)



Reading Tasmin Little's account of how the programme of this CD came into

being, it is interesting to note that it was William Lloyd Webber's last completed composition, *The Gardens of Eastwell* (subtitled 'A Late Summer Impression'), written in c1980, that was the determining factor. Recorded in its definitive version for the first time, it is a charming, indeed haunting miniature, which sticks in the mind.

While this piece dates from the very end of the composer's life, the other works essentially date from the first phases of their authors' maturity. From this standpoint, the earliest is the surviving movement of Bliss's Sonata in F, composed sometime between 1914 and 1916 before he was wounded in the Battle of the Somme. As in the early String Quartet in A (1914), there is much evidence of Bliss still coming to terms with a late-Romantic technical apparatus (perhaps a little redolent of his hero, Elgar), very different from the more neo-classical works he adopted directly after the war. A little overblown at times perhaps (as is the wont of young ambitious composers), the work nevertheless evinces some tender lyrical moments, especially at the close, which Little and Lane shape with exquisite tenderness.

Ireland's expansive Violin Sonata No 1 of 1908-09 (rev 1917 and 1944), a much-underrated work, is performed here with passion and commitment throughout, and Little brings persuasive contrast to the piece in the big-boned gestures of the first movement and the wistful intensity of the Romance. Both players also capture compellingly in Vaughan Williams's Two Pieces (c1912-14, though not published until 1923) that fragile language of synthetic modality (derived from folksong), and Impressionism (from his days with Ravel in Paris) which the composer was discovering just before the war in *A London Symphony* and *The Lark Ascending* (for which these two pieces are surely 'études'). These are splendid, sensitive, insightful interpretations by two great advocates of British music. I hope Vol 3 is forthcoming! **Jeremy Dibble**



Nevermind pip their Barockin' counterparts to the post in Guillemain's quartet sonatas

'Conversations'

Guillemain Sonatas - Op 1 No 3; Op 3 No 4

Quentin Concerto, Op 12. Sonatas - Op 8 No 4; Op 10 No 5; Op 15 No 3

Nevermind

Alpha © ALPHA235 (74' • DDD)



Ensemble Nevermind took the title for their debut disc from Louis-Gabriel

Guillemain's 1743 collection of *Sonates en quatuors ou conversations galantes*. Quartets? Haydn didn't begin composing quartets much before the 1760s. Guillemain? He was a successful French violinist, the last in a line of Parisian composers to write Italianate Baroque/pre-Classical chamber music in four parts, beginning with Antoine Charpentier (mid-1680s) and including François Couperin and Jean Baptiste Quentin. Couperin's four-part *sonades* – composed in the 1690s and published as *Les Nations* in 1726 – have been recorded many times, yet this is our first taste of Quentin. Why have we not heard this music before? Well you may ask. Both Quentin and Guillemain were highly regarded in their day, and perhaps

now their moment has finally come. The first recording of Guillemain's quartet sonatas, made by the Ensemble Barockin', appeared last year (Raumklang).

Both Quentin and Guillemain were professional violinists, one at the Paris Opéra, the other at the court of Louis XV, yet in their *sonates à quatre parties* they give the first of the upper parts to a flute, the second to a violin. By French tradition – and in Telemann's 12 'Paris Quartets' (1730, 1738) – the third was allocated to a bass viol rather than a *quinte* (viola), the fourth to a cello and/or harpsichord. Not quite string quartets as we know them, and unlike the earliest, all three upper parts engage here in 'conversation'. Quentin's (after 1729, 1740) appeared in print at much the same time as Telemann's, and Guillemain's slightly later (1743, 1756).

Nevermind's CD begins and ends with movements from Quentin's delightful Op 12 *Concerto à quatre parties* that charmingly illustrate conversational rapport. Stylistically, Quentin's music has much in common with that of his Italianate contemporary Jean-Marie Leclair. Listeners please note that the Op 10 (No 5) Sonata is in three parts only and dominated by the flute.

The first of the two Guillemain sonatas included on the CD owes something to

Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* (1741), though the harpsichord is less prominent here, taking only one line rather than two. The *Larghetto* is leisurely and atmospheric; the *Allegro* finale stormy. The opening *Allegro* of the second sonata (1756) is also turbulent – more *Sturm und Drang* – while the *Aria grátioso* reverts to conversation with a lovely filigree realisation of the bass from Jean Rondeau. Indeed, the playing throughout the disc is first rate, and in Guillemain Nevermind pip Ensemble Barockin' at the post. **Julie Anne Sadie**

'A Moveable Feast'

Falla El Amor brujo - Pantomime and Ritual Fire Dance **Ravel** Frontispice. Le tombeau de Couperin **Vaughan Williams** Piano Quintet

Stockholm Syndrome Ensemble

Channel Classics © CCS36916 (58' • DDD)



'Stockholm Syndrome Ensemble': what on earth were they thinking? Your first

assumption is that it's some sort of wordplay, but no, read the booklet: apparently they genuinely have named themselves after the psychological trauma

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suffered by hostages. Incomprehensible. They're a bit more forthcoming on the theme of this CD: a programme of Ravel, Vaughan Williams and Falla inspired by the fact that all three composers were active in Paris prior to the First World War.

It's a promising idea, and you can almost forgive the booklet-note's bizarre reference to Vaughan Williams's 'mild scores full of old folk tunes'. His early C minor Piano Quintet isn't exactly over-recorded, and if this performance lacks the overall focus of the Schubert Ensemble on Chandos, there's plenty to enjoy here. These players generate a real sense of inwardness in the little pools of tranquillity that punctuate Vaughan Williams's big, Brahmsian climaxes, and throughout there's a feeling of musicians listening and responding, enjoying each other's company. Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, in an elegant piano sextet arrangement by Marijn van Prooijen, also comes off nicely: savour the little kick-and-a-bounce with which they launch the Forlane and the crispness of the Rigaudon.

Sadly the recording doesn't serve them well. String chamber works with piano are notoriously difficult to balance and the miking here seems to lurch about from piano to strings. Overall it's boomy, favouring the bass – not entirely a bad thing with a bass player as expressive as Rick Stotijn – but it gives a sometimes hectoring edge to Simon Crawford-Phillips's piano; an asset in the machine-music of Ravel's extraordinary *Frontispice* [sic], disruptive elsewhere. An unignorable problem on an otherwise attractive disc – that and the group's name, of course. If the Stockholm Syndrome Ensemble are reading this: please, change it. It does you no favours. **Richard Bratby**

Vaughan Williams – selected comparison:

Schubert Ens (6/08) (CHAN) CHAN10465

'Sonates et Suites'

Blavet Troisième Livre de Sonates – Sonata No 2

Chéron Sonates en duo et en trio – Sonate No 3

Chédeville Il pastor fido – Sonata No 6 **Dieupart**

Six Suites de clavecin – Suite No 1 **Hotteterre**

Deuxième Livre de Pièces – Sonata; Suite No 3

Leclair Second Livre de Sonates – Sonata No 11

Marais Pièces de viole, Book 2 – Couplets de

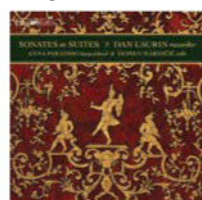
Folies (arr Laurin) **Philidor** Premier Livre de

Pièces – Recorder Sonata

Dan Laurin rec **Domen Marinčič** vc

Anna Paradiso hpd

BIS (F) BIS2185 (85' • DDD/DSD)



This is a delightful, well-paced recital of early- and mid-18th-century French music,

if not always composed specifically for the recorder then certainly suited to it. In an era when it was fashionable to play an instrument, Chédeville went so far as to suggest that his sonatas could also be played on the bagpipe or hurdy-gurdy (aristocratic Arcadian pursuits)! So keen was he to promote this collection that he published it as being by Vivaldi (hence the reference to *Il pastor fido*) rather than as his own. The Philidor sonata was composed for the 'flûte à bec'.

Like Chédeville, Hotteterre and Blavet were highly esteemed wind players, while Chéron was a keyboard player and Leclair and Dieupart were violinists, yet many of Leclair's sonatas were sold as suitable for transverse flute or violin. Dan Laurin has, accordingly, assembled a recital of some of the most idiomatic for the recorder. His masterful solo recorder arrangement of Marais's *Couplets de folies* (originally for bass viol) represents a departure from the usual arrangements with continuo and not only shows the recorder to fullest effect but also illustrates his own considerable musicianship.

Overall, the music is a cosmopolitan mixture of French and Italian styles. My favourite items are the Philidor and Blavet sonatas. Laurin enriches the *Lentement* of the former with expressive vibrato but it is Philidor's lively syncopated fugues that give most pleasure. The Blavet is a virtuoso work – the variations in the final movement are definitely not for amateurs – and all the better for being paired with harpsichord alone. Anna Paradiso's accompaniments are unfailingly sympathetic and stylish. Elsewhere, particularly in the Chédeville and Chéron, the continuo cello part, though beautifully executed by Domen Marinčič, nevertheless overpowers the recorder when playing in its lower register.

Julie Anne Sadie

'Spectrum'

Janáček Violin Sonata **Kreisler** Viennese

Rhapsodic Fantasia **Schubert** Violin Sonata,

'Grand Duo', D574 **Stravinsky** Divertimento

Benjamin Beilman vn **Yekwon Sunwoo** pf

Warner Classics (F) 2564 60089-7 (69' • DDD)



Less may be more but more is even better – or so Benjamin Beilman

seems to think. This 26-year-old American violinist has developed an alarmingly literal approach to the concept of 'bow attack', often coming down on the string like a sledghammer. It

definitely brings a pungency to 'Spectrum', his new disc of miscellaneous goodies for violin and piano, if perhaps not in the way he intended.

In Schubert's Sonata in A major, D574, for example, it sounds positively bizarre. But so do various other idiosyncrasies: the violent swells, the galumphing quavers, the rigidly foursquare way with phrasing. Were it not for Yekwon Sunwoo's delicate pianism, this would score pitifully low on poetry. One senses that Beilman needs a work that gives vent to his more ferocious instincts.

He certainly finds it in Janáček's primal Violin Sonata, and yet, ironically, it's here that his capacity for introspection emerges: the Ballada, in particular, offers moments of real mystery and poise. Not that they ever last very long. For the most part Beilman's tone is too raw, even for Janáček, without the undertow of genuine passion to justify it.

Perhaps this disc's biggest frustration, however, is its uniformity: rarely do Schubert and Janáček sound so alike. And it's telling that all six sections of Stravinsky's Divertimento from *Le baiser de la fée* feel as though they've merged into one. Only in Kreisler's *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasia* does Beilman really come into his own. Here is charm, swagger and, yes, refinement, suggesting that a wider colour palette is within this violinist's reach. If only it weren't quite so short-lived. **Hannah Nepil**

'Virtuoso'

Britten Reveille **Dvořák** Humoresque, Op 101

B187 No 7 (arr Kreisler) **Dohnányi** Ruralla

hungarica – Andante alla zingaresca **Elgar**

La Capricieuse, Op 17 **Falla** El sombrero de

tres picos – Miller's Dance (transcr Sziget)

Paganini Introduction and Variations on

Paisiello's 'Nel cor più non mi sento', Op 38.

Variations on 'God save the King', Op 9

Sarasate Caprice Basque, Op 24. Romanza

andaluza, Op 22 **R Strauss** Der Rosenkavalier –

Waltzes (arr Přihoda) **Stravinsky** Mavra –

Chanson russe. Petrushka – Danse russe

(both arr Dushkin) **Tárrega** Recuerdos de la

Alhambra (transcr Ricci) **Tchaikovsky** Valse

sentimentale, Op 51 No 6 **Wieniawski**

Capriccio-valse, Op 7

Leonidas Kavakos vn **Enrico Pace** pf

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NATURE, TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Kate Molleson listens to a collection of discs featuring music that mixes traditional forms and innovative evocations of the natural world



Errollyn Wallen, with conductor Nicholas Kok, at the sessions for 'Photography'

There's a photograph in the booklet that accompanies the new Kreutzer Quartet recording of **Edward Cowie's** String Quartets Nos 3-5. It shows the septuagenarian Birmingham-born composer in vest and cargo trousers, shades and backwards baseball cap, sketching among thick foliage in a sunny garden. If it weren't for the outfit he could be Messiaen or Janáček, happily installed in nature and gleaning the sounds around him. In the same booklet violinist Peter Sheppard Skærved writes about Cowie's rehearsal instructions: 'My music must never sound modern,' the composer would keep telling the quartet. 'It has to be natural.'

Cowie's music does sound natural, and in ways far more elusive and compelling than simply mimicking the sounds of that sunny garden. His Fifth Quartet (2004) is called *Birdsong Bagatelles* and is made up of 24 miniatures, each named after a British bird: heron, wren, cuckoo, kestrel, tawny owl – they're all there, rarely in actual song quotations

but as fond and gleeful and strangely wistful little character pieces. The four movements of *In Flight Music* (the Third Quartet, composed in the early 1980s but reworked in 2010) are inspired by raptors, hummingbird hawk-moths and vapour trails, and likewise these images are conjured up through deftness and flux rather than any overt sound pictures. The music has the weightlessness of a bird riding thermals, the frenetic duck-and-dive of small winged creatures, the constant shimmer of ever-changing flock formations. The fourth movement, 'Raptor Thermals', contains some breathtaking moments of stillness at the heart of all those shape-shifting textures. The single-movement Fourth Quartet is darker and more introverted but the fluidity and grace are still there. And the Kreutzers do justice to Cowie's instructions: their glossy performance doesn't sound modern or unmodern, particularly, but it does sound natural.

Fluidity is a quality I also enjoyed in the new disc of string quartet works by

the French composer **Philippe Hersant**, recorded with great style and confidence and an impressively elastic ensemble sound by the Hugo Wolf Quartet. The oldest piece in the collection is the Second String Quartet (1988): two hefty outer movements separated by brief reflective interludes, and it's not surprising that Hersant wrote this score for theatre shows because there's a clear sense of dramatic trajectory, a narrative that draws you in without being overly explicit. *Onze Caprices* (1993) are miniature duos in the vein of Kurtág or Bartók, full of bite, earthy intervals and fleeting lyricism. There are no fancy extended techniques and the language is unapologetically tonal – from the twitchy spark of No 1, 3, 6 and 9 to the sinew of No 2 to the lean, ghostly lines of Nos 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11, this is fluent and likeable writing. The *Fantasies sur le nom de Sacher* (2012) and the Five Movements for string quartet (2010) present a more recent Hersant, and if anything he's become more rooted in tonality and the lush string quartet idioms of early-20th-century French and Eastern European composers. Some of his tricks are a bit worn – the mournful chorale with soaring violin above that ends the Five Movements – but not enough to ruin things. Hersant is a composer who knows how to do a lot in a little space, how not to pack in too much and how to use simple gestures with conviction.

Sticking with themes of economy and fluency and natural-sounding-ness, **James Wood** writes pieces of bristling rhythm and taut, colourful percussive effects. He's a fine percussionist as well as a conductor and composer, and it shows in his choral music, where voices splutter and whisper and splatter out consonants. He makes swirling sounds from amassed sibilance and pungent textures from the breath of many singers. *Tongues of Fire* is a virtuoso piece of vocal writing for chorus and percussion quartet. It was commissioned in 2001 to celebrate the 140th anniversary of Yale Glee Club, and the fact that the overwhelmingly white and privileged institution is situated in New Haven – a city of stark social and racial inequalities – makes the music's Latin American and African American

influences especially piquant. Was that Wood's intention? 'Conscious of the enormous tradition of American university Glee Clubs,' he writes, 'and the part that gospel and spiritual music always seems to have played in it, my thoughts for a subject were immediately drawn towards the story of Pentecost.' The piece begins with an invocation, a call to arms, an overture to a ritual. The text is mostly in Latin American Spanish plus a gaggle of tongues (Hebrew, Maori, Jamaican English, Latin, Hungarian) depicting Christ's followers. Whether his point is political or not, I get the sense Wood enjoys playing with diverse languages for their diverse rhythmic qualities, and he certainly draws a punchy delivery from the MDR Leipzig Radio Choir.

But I'll admit I found more straightforward pleasure in the jubilant spark of *Cloud-Polyphonies*: a three-part piece in which Wood (like Cowie) explores shifting natural formations. The first movement, 'Starlings', features the mellow swing of marimba and woodblock; the second, 'Clouds', has a mercurial metallic glint and the third movement uses brightly circling simantras, bullroarers and 66 drums to represent herds of galloping buffalo.

The Nimbus Alliance label is on to the sixth instalment its survey of works by **Augusta Read Thomas**, and this latest disc presents the American composer in chamber mode. I can't say it thrilled me; there's something schooled and proper about Read Thomas's style, something that makes her a safe bet for institutions and commissioners (she was composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for nine years). The string quartet *Helix Spirals* was inspired by breakthroughs in DNA biology in the 1950s; its contours are lean and clean and unmemorable, and the Parker Quartet give a neat and committed account. Third Coast Percussion perform *Selene*, a piece for percussion and string quartet named after the Greek lunar goddess, and here the studied rhythms and earnest crescendos have a more gritted-teeth, less organic feel than what we get in *Helix*. Nathan Giem never finds the wild abandon suggested by the title of *Capricious Toccata* for solo violin, though more throttle comes in Nathan Cole's virtuoso attack in the strident earlier violin pieces *Caprice* and *Rush*. The most striking work on the album is the title piece, *Of Being is a Bird*, which is a soaring song-setting made glorious largely thanks to soprano Claire Booth, for whom

it was written. A luminous ensemble interlude (the Aurora Ensemble in spry form conducted by Nicholas Collon) is bookended by settings Emily Dickinson poems. Here we return to images of Avian flight: 'it soars – and shifts – and whirls – and measures with the Clouds,' Dickinson writes, but although Read Thomas's writing is duly rapt, it ultimately remains earthbound, light-filled but sensible. The album closes with an arrangement for solo piano of Irving Berlin's 'Love twitters', played by Nicola Melville with the kind of blithe swing I was missing in much of the rest of the disc.

A far less self-conscious, more instinctive thrust governs 'Photography' – the new collection of orchestral works by Belize-born British composer **Errollyn Wallen**. 'Music seemed to yank me towards it,' she writes in her booklet-notes, and her music has an attractive plain-speak and a fun, broad palette. The Cello Concerto opens with an eloquent soliloquy from cellist Matthew Sharp, and Wallen herself sings Dido's Lament in the final piece, *In Earth*, her voice touchingly breathy and rough and intimate while rumbles from bass guitarist Tim Harries obscure the edges of Purcell's tune. In the central pieces, *Hunger* and *Photography*, Wallen's writing sometimes feels a bit flimsy, a bit 'filler': occasionally her pastiches of Baroque or jazz or minimalism sound like building blocks that haven't yet been made into anything. But these pieces are lovingly performed by The Continuum Ensemble and Orchestra X, Ensemble X and Quartet X – various incarnations of the London-based ensemble she established to play her music – and overall her versatility and candour win out. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Cowie In Flight Music
Kreutzer Quartet
NMC © NMCD222



Hersant Fantaisies pour cordes
Hugo Wolf Quartet
Megadisc © MDC7873



Wood Cloud-Polyphonies
Various artists
NMC © NMCD223



Read Thomas Of Being is a Bird
Various artists
Nimbus © NI6323



Wallen Photography
Various artists
NMC © NMCD221

of hearing a great violinist at the top of his game (musically and technically). It's Kavakos's knack of treating the microphone as though it were a group of his close friends who have been invited round to his place. You are given the impression of eavesdropping on a pair of musicians having a real blast (Enrico Pace is the other – a marvellously attentive but far from self-effacing accompanist). The programme is a collection of 15 end-of-recital dazzlers (well, 14 – Britten's odd *Reveille* falls outside the category of crowd-pleaser) of the kind that furnished violin recitals in the past before they became the hellish serious business they are today.

Stravinsky's 'Danse russe' from *Petrushka* and soulful 'Chanson russe' (both given in the transcriptions by Samuel Dushkin) open proceedings and set the tone. The first glimpse of Kavakos's fabulous agility comes at the end of Sarasate's *Caprice Basque* but is emphatically underlined a few tracks further on with Paganini's Introduction and Variations on 'Nel cor più non mi sento' from Paisello's *La molinara* (the track before is de Falla's 'Danza del molinero' – smart).

This is playing that sorts out the men from the boys. I doubt if there is more than a handful of violinists alive who can match Kavakos in the tonal variety, accuracy and speed of his harmonics, or in the deft alternation of bowing and left-hand pizzicato. In fact, I wonder if Paganini would have equalled him. Then there is the perfect evenness of *moto perpetuo* semiquavers in *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* – a remarkable feat at this speed, even if the violin begins to sound like a pesky mosquito disturbing one's siesta rather than the soulful song it is on the guitar.

Elsewhere there is charm aplenty (Elgar's *La Capricieuse*, Váša Příhoda's arrangement of the waltzes from *Der Rosenkavalier*) and tender introspection (Tchaikovsky's 'Valse sentimentale'). And if you thought Dvořák's 'Humoresque' was beyond parody, think again in this heart-wrenching rendition by Kavakos and Pace. You can almost see the smiles of affection on the faces of their imaginary audience – just as clearly as Kavakos's mischievous twinkle when he dashes off Wieniawski's *Capriccio-valse*, another delicious bon-bon we should hear more often. I can't remember when I last enjoyed a violin recital quite as much as this. And it's complemented by Tully Potter's genial booklet and an ideal recorded balance between the two artists. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Benny Goodman

Philip Clark surveys the career of a clarinettist who recorded Mozart, Bartók and Copland while changing the course of jazz history by launching the Swing Era

When Benny Goodman died in June 1986, aged 77, he was in the middle of rehearsals for an appearance at that year's Mostly Mozart festival in New York City and his daughter Rachel has recounted the last time she saw her father – looking contented in his apartment, clarinet in hand, standing next to a music stand overflowing with sheet music by Brahms and Mozart.

Goodman had always been a classicist by instinct.

The saxophonist, bandleader and jazz historian Loren Schoenberg, who became his music director during the last decade of his life, has recalled marvelling at the precision with which Goodman

communicated every grace note, trill and suppleness of orchestration as he taught his library of classic 1930s swing arrangements to a band of young jazz turks 50 years later. For Goodman, these scores by master arrangers like Fletcher Henderson, Eddie Sauter and Edgar Sampson held their allure as magically as the inner mechanics of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto – because whether playing jazz, or interpreting a classical concerto, Goodman was fascinated by the spontaneity of interaction between soloist and ensemble.

It's only right and proper that today Goodman is remembered primarily as a catalyst for jazz change. Had he never been born and elevated big bands into being the pop music of the mid-1930s, jazz might have skipped one of its key developmental milestones – but the development of Western classical music would, of course, have marched forwards irrespective.

But Goodman's second career as a classical clarinettist was far too important, and remains too influential, to overlook. As he recorded cornerstone works like Mozart's Clarinet Quintet (with the Budapest Quartet) and Clarinet Concerto (with Charles Munch and

the Boston Symphony Orchestra), Debussy's First Rhapsody (John Barbirolli and the New York Philharmonic) and chamber music by Brahms and Weber (often accompanied by pianist Nadia Reisenberg), he also used his celebrity status as The King of Swing, often matched by his personal wealth, to stir up interest in new music. And Goodman had impeccable taste: the composers he commissioned, or would collaborate with, included Bartók,

Stravinsky, Bernstein, Morton Gould, Milhaud, Britten, Copland and Hindemith – and with Gould and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra he recorded Nielsen's

thorny Clarinet Concerto, a rarity indeed back in 1967.

On January 16, 1938, Goodman brought his swing band with assembled guests, including Count Basie, Buck Clayton and Lester Young, together at Carnegie Hall – the first time a jazz orchestra had headlined America's classical music mecca. The momentous reputation of the hall clearly prayed on Goodman's mind – 'How long does Toscani take?' he replied when asked how long he needed his interval to be.

But as he prepared for this historic jazz concert, Goodman was also corresponding with Bartók. Joseph Szigeti, recently arrived in the US, had wanted to commission his fellow Hungarian – and the result was *Contrasts*, Bartók's 20-minute trio for clarinet, violin and piano, paid for out of Goodman's own pocket.

Goodman had made his debut as a classical player in 1935 giving a private performance of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, then slotting the slow movement into his popular radio show *Let's Dance*. Subsequently he would take lessons with the great British clarinettist Reginald Kell, who buffed up his technique and led Goodman to experiment with double-lip embouchure (teeth wrapped around the

*It's only right and proper that today
Goodman is remembered primarily
as a catalyst for jazz change*

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1935 – *The Swing Era ignites*

After a disappointing start to their tour, Goodman's band causes a riot at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles, triggering the Swing Era.

• 1938 – *Carnegie Hall and Bartók*

Goodman's Orchestra creates musical and social history, being the first jazz orchestra to play at Carnegie Hall – a concert that united black and white musicians on stage. Commissions Bartók's *Contrasts*.

• 1940 – *Mozart*

Makes his first recording of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto – with Barbirolli and the NYPO.

• 1950 – *A famous premiere*

Goodman gives the premiere of Copland's Clarinet Concerto, which he commissioned, with Fritz Reiner and the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

• 1962 – *Behind the Iron Curtain*

Goodman's Orchestra, with blues singer Jimmy Rushing, tours Soviet Russia.

• 1978 – *Carnegie reunion*

Original Goodman band members, including vibraphone player Lionel Hampton, celebrate in a messy but hugely enjoyable concert.



PHOTOGRAPHY: TRINITY MIRROR/MIRRORPIX/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

top of the mouthpiece) – a radical technical departure from standard single-lip embouchure. But already in 1940, a whole decade before his lessons with Kell, his recording of Bartók's *Contrasts* (with the composer and Szigeti) is a remarkably assured document, the exposing delicacies of Bartók's writing leaving Goodman unfazed while those foot-stamping Hungarian folk rhythms in the last movement really do swing.

Let's not pretend that Goodman's 1956 take on Mozart's Clarinet Concerto has the same appeal to purist Mozartians as it does to those wanting to hear their jazz hero in a different context. You wonder why, during Goodman's surprisingly stiff treatment

of the slow movement, he couldn't draw on the same expressive rhythmic leeway used to colour jazz ballad performances like his classic 1936 'Moonglow'. But Goodman was minded to keep jazz and classical music separate. The occasional gem like Alec Templeton's

'Bach Goes To Town' and a swing reboot of Ravel's *Boléro* aside, he was never much motivated to swing the classics. Those trademark excited rasps and his rhythmic momentum were reserved for his jazz playing; even when performing Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* or Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* he played with a detached subjectivity that let the music swing – but on the composer's own terms. **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Bartók *Contrasts*.
Rhapsody No. 1.
Mikrokosmos
Benny Goodman
c/ Joseph Szigeti
vn **Béla Bartók** pf
Naxos

Instrumental



David Fanning on a mixed recital from pianist Yuliana Avdeeva:

'playing of considerable poise and taste, which certainly never uses the music as the vehicle for an inflated ego' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 65](#)



Charlotte Gardner listens to some newly rediscovered Telemann:

'He presents a cornucopia of broken chords, unison and contrapuntal writing, passagework and plucking' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 69](#)

JS Bach

'Testament'

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Rachel Barton Pine *vn*

Avie ② AV2360 (126' • DDD)



Alarm bells always start to ring when the cover of a performance of solo Bach gives the

disc a moniker and prints it – and the name of the performer – in letters so large that the words 'JS Bach' at the bottom of the cover can do nothing but look like an afterthought. So it is a happy relief to find that the performance behind the cover of Rachel Barton Pine's 'Testament' is one of the best of this set of peerless works to have been released since Isabelle Faust's definitive volumes of 2010 and 2012.

Although Pine's performance is fundamentally different to Faust's, it does display a similar quiet lack of egotism that doesn't manipulate the listener into any conclusions. That is not to say that there is no sense of Pine's own interpretation here, nor that it is a bland performance: there is a surprisingly striking contrast between its crystalline voicing, clear articulation and warm tone that makes the listener feel that it is concerned with the plain and simple beauty of the music as much as with the genius of its counterpoint and relationships between movements.

All this is further supported by the sensible combination of Baroque bow and metal strings on a period instrument in modern set-up – the tuning is unfailingly accurate and the strength of the bowing means there is never any interference with the musical line by a squeak or break. As a result, the stillness she is able to create through the absence of any vibrato at the end of a select number of phrases (to particularly desolate effect in the Sarabande of the D minor Partita) is not only emotionally effective but also plainly informed by good performance practice study. All at the same time as presenting

nothing to complicate the grace of the dance lines in the Partitas (in particular in the Bourrée of the E major Partita) or the clarity of the internal dialogue of the counterpoint in the Sonatas (as in the Prelude of the Sonata in C major).

This apparent simplicity, which should not be confused with lack of insight (Pine has plainly studied these pieces from every possible angle), is particularly effective in the mighty Chaconne of the D minor Partita. It is the litmus test for any performance of these pieces, and where, if anywhere, a performer risks losing their interpretative nerve. Here, though, Pine is as steadfast as she is in the rest of the set: the complexity of the musical language is as transparent as it is anywhere else under her pared-down interpretation, creating moments of extraordinary beauty. These sparing touches, which under the fingers of many players can sound glib at best or contrived at worst, serve to finesse an already thoughtful and generous performance into something of great maturity and depth. **Caroline Gill**

Selected comparison:

Faust (6/10, 11/12) (HARM) HMX290 8474/5 (*nas*)
or HMC90 2059/2124 (*oas*)

JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier -

Book 1, BWV846-869

Christophe Rousset *hpd*

Aparté ② AP120 (125' • DDD)



No one could accuse Christophe Rousset of rushing to record *The Well-Tempered*

Clavier; Book 1 arrives a year after Book 2 (3/15), and two decades after his admired recordings of the *Goldberg Variations*, Partitas, *Italian Concerto*, *French Overture* and *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, made in his early days with Decca L'Oiseau-Lyre. Yet if his playing in these 24 Preludes and Fugues sounds like that of a wise head and experienced hand, it should be said that it

somehow always did, especially in Bach.

Rousset has ever been at heart a fundamentally serious musician, aligning himself less with the mildly crazy freedom of a Ton Koopman than with the studied control of a Gustav Leonhardt or a Kenneth Gilbert, with whom he shares a reliance on good fingers, very occasional well-chosen ornaments and canny but subtle agogic shaping governed by an underlying sense of steady but continuous flow.

Yet if this sober approach – echoed in Rousset's somewhat technical booklet-notes – is one that doesn't always reveal its charms immediately, it is certainly worth sticking with, and indeed makes a sound guide to these wonderful and varied works. Rousset is undoubtedly at his best in the longer and more traditional fugues such as those in C sharp minor, D sharp minor, F minor and B minor, where his care for measured contrapuntal discourse gives them a truly impressive monumental quality; more playful and energetic fugues such as the C minor or the E minor, however, can come across as rather straight-faced, as does the fugato section that drops like a stone into the middle of the E flat major Prelude. Elsewhere the sheer expertise of his playing yields happy rewards: the E flat minor and E major Preludes show how a right-hand line can sing; the E major Fugue leaps into life with a deliciously deft non-legato; and there is great skill in the way he conjures up the orchestral texture of B flat minor Prelude. The B minor Prelude, often treated as a dreamy essay by pianists, is here brisk and no-nonsense, its walking bass sounding like one that wants actually to get somewhere.

I rather enjoyed Céline Frisch's recent sprightly Book 1; but although I would have liked a less tangy harpsichord and was sometimes irritated by bumpy edits, I also found in Rousset's considered and classy account a properly stimulating alternative.

Lindsay Kemp

Selected comparison:

Frisch (4/16) (ALPH) ALPHA221



Rachel Barton Pine's Bach Sonatas and Partitas is a recording of great maturity and depth

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas - No 3, Op 2 No 3; No 25, Op 79; No 27, Op 90; No 28, Op 101

Jonathan Biss *pf*

JB Recordings/Meyer Media © MM16030 (66' • DDD)



As in Jonathan Biss's first four Beethoven discs, Vol 5 offers a mix of works from various periods. It adds up to a well-contrasted programme that would work just as well in recital as it does for home listening. In Op 2 No 3's opening movement, Biss revels in Beethoven's *Allegro con brio* directive albeit without Pollini's edgier demeanour and more pronounced *fortes*. The *Adagio*, however, gains in expressive complexity by virtue of Biss's scrupulous attention to articulation, dynamics and rests. Similarly, Biss shapes the Scherzo's detached phrases with the utmost specificity, never accenting or flattening out the main theme's up-beats. For all the finale's impressive poise and polish, Biss doesn't give in to the music's drive and bravura in the manner of Paavali Jumppanen's recording (Ondine, 5/14).

If Schnabel's brand of 'sophisticated simplicity' eludes Biss (and most other pianists, to be fair) in Op 79, it's still a fine and straightforward reading. However, the pianist truly puts an individual stamp on Op 90's first movement with strategic tenuto's, uncommonly emphasised inner voices plus a remarkably even execution of the rapid rotary passages. Also note how Biss breaks the curvaceously introspective spell he casts in the second movement by honouring the final measures' *accelerando* and abrupt return to tempo, as if the music suddenly stops in mid-air. Indeed, Biss singles out this sonata for special praise in his insightful and provocative booklet-notes.

He strikes a persuasive balance between freedom and rigour in Op 101's lyrical opening and gnarly fugal finale, although the pianist's well-sprung dotted rhythms and careful voice-leading in the March don't quite match the energetic exactitude and attention to the composer's *subito* dynamics distinguishing Claudio Arrau's analogue Philips recording. In short, this excellently engineered release continues to substantiate Jonathan Biss as a cultivated, stylish, serious-minded and subtly playful Beethoven interpreter with something to say. **Jed Distler**

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas - No 16, Op 31 No 1; No 17, 'Tempest', Op 31 No 2; No 18, Op 31 No 3; No 24, Op 78; No 25, Op 79; No 26, 'Les adieux', Op 81a; No 27, Op 90

Paavali Jumppanen *pf*

Ondine © ② ODE1290-2D (119' • DDD)



Paavali Jumppanen's Beethoven cycle gets better with each new instalment and nearly everything here is a keeper. He obviously adores Op 31 No 1: listen to the way he underlines the 'ker-plopping' effect of the *Allegro vivace*'s desynchronised chords with ever-so-subtle rhythmic distensions and shifts of emphasis, and without pulling focus from the basic pulse. Despite an expansive tempo for the *Adagio grazioso*, the music buoyantly moves forward by virtue of Jumppanen's strong left-hand underpinning and by avoiding slackening or tapering the fast decorative right-hand passagework. The term *grazioso* returns in a lyrically parsed finale.

Listeners familiar with Jumppanen's *Tempest* Sonata from a live Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum podcast will find this new

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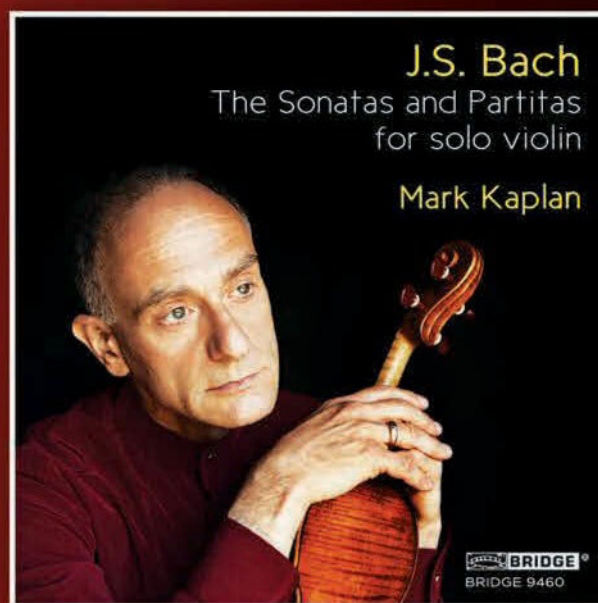
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—**Herald Times**



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Powerful, uplifting and personalised: Paavali Jumppanen's Beethoven sonata cycle approaches its completion

recording bolder and more dynamically assertive in the outer movements. My only quibble concerns his neutral, matter-of-fact treatment of the hushed left-hand broken octaves that pianists such as Gieseking, Schnabel and Kempff made so disparately memorable. There are brasher Op 31 No 3 first movements to be had, yet Jumppanen's fluttering semi-staccato shaping of the long lines equally invigorates, as does his crisply pointed woodwind-like articulation in the Scherzo. If the *Presto con fuoco* finale appears to rush ahead at times, the fault is with your ears, not with Jumppanen's perfectly poised fingers and his over-the-bar-line phrasing.

The little Op 78 receives one of its finest recorded performances. It begins with a sensitively inflected, intelligently proportioned *Allegro ma non troppo*, followed by a rollicking *Allegro vivace* that revels in the music's sudden major/minor mode shifts. Lightness and simplicity is exactly what Op 79 needs and receives in the first two movements. Jumppanen holds back at the third-movement *Vivace*'s outset, then works his way up to tempo – an unorthodox yet oddly effective touch. Op 90 fares best in the quasi-Schubertian second movement but the first movement is a shade heavy and square compared to

recent contenders from Stewart Goodyear (Marquis) and François-Frédéric Guy (ZZT, 8/13). However, Jumppanen triumphs in *Les adieux*, fusing Schnabel's surging ebullience and Solomon's suave technical finish into a powerful, uplifting and personalised whole.

As before, Ondine provides state-of-the-art engineering and Jumppanen contributes superb annotations. I look forward to the fifth and final volume, which will include Op 7, the *Pathétique* and the last three sonatas. **Jed Distler**

Brahms • Poulenc • Ravel

Brahms Three Piano Pieces, Op 117. Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24
Poulenc Deux Novelettes. Novelette sur un thème de Manuel de Falla. Trois Pièces – Toccata. Improvisations – No 1; No 3; No 6; No 13; No 15
Ravel Valses nobles et sentimentales
Simon Trpčeski *pf*
 Wigmore Hall Live (M) WHLIVE0081 (80' • DDD)
 Recorded live, July 19, 2014



With few exceptions, Poulenc's piano music is so seldom programmed that

hearing a representative selection almost seems a discovery. The self-effacing composer may himself have been partly responsible for the neglect. He famously declared that only in his songs did he become inventive at the keyboard, while solo piano music eluded him. Fortunately the enduring quality of his music for other media piques the curiosity of pianists now and then, and we're reminded that Poulenc's self-assessment was too modest. This is amply demonstrated in this July 2014 Wigmore Hall recital by the Macedonian pianist Simon Trpčeski, for which a well-chosen bouquet of Poulenc serves as highlight and culmination.

These are miniatures – the longest, *Hommage à Edith Piaf*, clocks in at a little over three minutes – which never overstay their welcome. Trpčeski brings a cheerful nonchalance to the ingratiating first *Novelette*, while the relaxed, slightly louche first *Improvisation* conjures up a chic cocktail lounge. He clearly revels in the concluding Toccata, the most pianistically resourceful of the lot, with its sly winks in the direction of Prokofiev. The overall impression is of freshness and wit, leaving one to ponder why we don't hear this music more often.

If marginally less idiomatic, Trpčeski's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* have much to

*there is another kind of light
and it is music*

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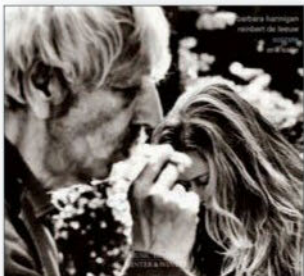


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Yulianna Avdeeva: technical finish and musical aptitude in her debut album of Chopin, Liszt and Mozart

recommend them. Ravel aficionados may be accustomed to subtler shading overall and the *Vif* movement could be more beguiling with a lighter touch. But whether capturing evanescent wistfulness, unselfconscious frolic or the heady intoxication of the dance, Trpčeski imbues these *Valses* with an unmistakably Parisian air.

All the more perplexing, then, to encounter the Brahms pieces, here cast as the hearty German main course before Ravel's palate-cleansing dances and Poulenc's sophisticated, urbane conversation over coffee and dessert. The three Op 117 Intermezzos are taken at such glacially slow tempi that they seem dead on arrival. This is not a matter of actual speed, of course, but of the ability to maintain the line, whatever the underlying pulse. This Trpčeski fails to do, and the first Intermezzo in particular crawls from beat to lethargic beat.

Finally arriving at the *Handel* Variations, it's difficult to escape the impression of a loosely connected series of self-contained vignettes, resembling *Pictures at an Exhibition* or perhaps *Carnaval*, in place of Brahms's taut, integrated progression of 25 unfolding transfigurations of Handel. Deprived of a

Schenkerian 'Umlinie', proceedings grind to a halt at the end of each variation, requiring a reboot for the next.

For the Brahms Op 117 Intermezzos, I know of no more beautiful recording than that of Maria João Pires. One classic recording of the *Handel* Variations is by Egon Petri, and more recent sterling performances are those by Leon McCawley and Jonathan Plowright. **Patrick Rucker**

Brahms Op 117 – selected comparison:

Pires (12/13) (DG) 479 0965GH

Brahms Handel Variations – selected comparisons:

Petri (10/38^e, 12/15) (APR) APR7701

McCawley (A/12) (SOMM) SOMMCD0116

Plowright (2/13) (BIS) BIS2047

Chopin • Liszt • Mozart

Chopin *Fantaisie*, Op 49 **Liszt** *Après une lecture du Dante*, S161 No 7. *Aida* di Giuseppe Verdi – *Danza sacra* e *Duetto finale*, S436

Mozart *Piano Sonata* No 6, K284

Yulianna Avdeeva *pf*

Mirare © MIR301 (67' • DDD)



Yulianna Avdeeva's first prize in the 2010 Chopin Competition was not without

controversy. Hearing her play Shostakovich last year in Vienna, I did myself wonder whether those who queried her success perhaps had a point, because whatever her undoubted technical finish and musical aptitude, big international careers depend (sometimes excessively, I admit) on sheer size of musical personality and communicative warmth, which are not – or not yet – Avdeeva's strong points. Probably we will have to wait a little longer before she succeeds in fully defining her musical personality; at the moment there is still a slight residual impression of a player formed by excellent teaching, rather than one who can throw caution to the wind and let the music play through her.

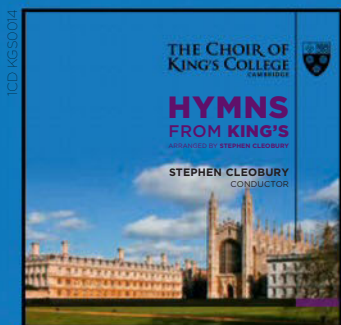
There are many pluses in this. Avdeeva's Chopin *Fantaisie* is polished, scrupulously blended in tone and intelligent in its articulation: playing of considerable poise and taste, which certainly never uses the music as the vehicle for an inflated ego. If she takes time in places, it is always in the interests of those musical values, not in order to indulge or impress.

Her Mozart is strongly projected, full-sized hall playing, unimpeachable in its combination of clarity, energy and elegance. For sheer eloquence and wit, however, my thoughts turn in the direction of Christian

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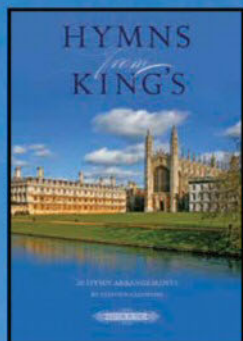
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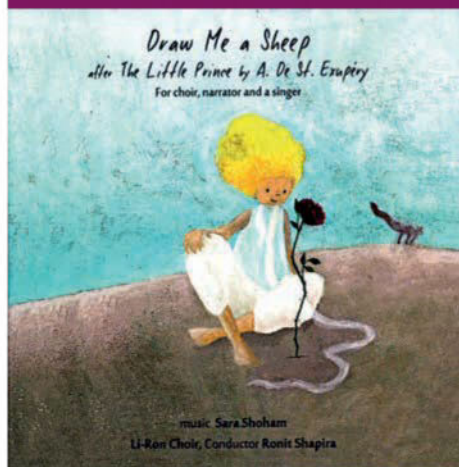
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Franz Halasz: thrilling and colourful playing of music by Llobet, Manén and Mompou (review on page 69)

Blackshaw – fresh in my mind since I recently reviewed the last in his Wigmore Hall series (1/16). With Avdeeva there is the sense of a precious musical object being held just a little too tightly for comfort.

Her declared ambition is to showcase Liszt as ‘a philosophical thinker, a humanist’. One might therefore question whether the *Dante Sonata* is the best choice for such a project. Even so, there is no denying that she shows how the piece can benefit from careful shaping and phrasing. Anyone hoping for a barnstorming showstopper of a performance had better look elsewhere, but Avdeeva’s technical aplomb is still highly impressive and there are far worse recordings out there by far ‘bigger’ artists.

Recording quality is satisfyingly warm and realistic, and the interview format of the booklet is forgivable for a debut album.

David Fanning

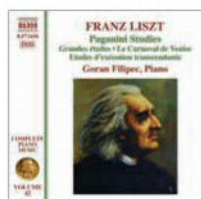
Liszt

‘Complete Piano Music,
Vol 42 – Paganini Studies’

Etudes d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini, S140. *Grandes études de Paganini*, S141. *La Carnaval de Venise*, S700

Goran Filipec *pf*

Naxos © 8 573458 (69' • DDD)



Paganini was already 46 when he first left his native Italy for a series of concerts throughout Europe. The effect of his playing on the younger generation of composers was profound and lasting, most notably on Berlioz, Schumann and Liszt. Among the works that made such an impression were his 24 Caprices, Op 1, for solo violin. Liszt set about writing a set of studies using Paganini’s material with the specific purpose of emulating on the piano the equivalent level of technical difficulty (and which, he hoped, would have a similar effect on the audience). The result was the *Etudes d'exécution transcendante d'après Paganini*, written between 1838 and 1840, using six of Paganini’s Caprices and ‘La campanella’, the rondo theme from the Second Violin Concerto in B minor.

These, with the alternative versions Liszt wrote of *Etudes* Nos 1, 4 and 5, are not often recorded for the very good reason that they are nothing like as effective as the (slightly) easier revised versions Liszt prepared in 1851. Even these do not crop up as a set that often

(Gary Graffman’s RCA account from 1959 and Marc-André Hamelin’s from 2002 remain personal favourites), though of course ‘La campanella’ (No 3) is ubiquitous.

Furthermore, there is only one other recording I know that couples both versions of the two sets of *Etudes*: Vol 48 of Leslie Howard’s complete solo piano music of Liszt. Fine as that is (recorded in 1997 at Pottton Hall) and enhanced by Howard’s superior booklet, on balance the scales just tip in favour of the newcomer. Goran Filipec (b1981 in Rijeka, Croatia) is a new name to me but in this repertoire at any rate he is the real deal. With a technique that makes you forget just how exacting these pieces are to play, Filipec not only generates the thrill of a live performance but does so with a disarming swagger and playfulness. Indeed, he nearly convinced me that the *Carnaval of Venice* variations are not as bad as they really are. Filipec is also, I note, the producer of the disc, one which can sit happily alongside those of Graffman and Hamelin.

Jeremy Nicholas

Complete Paganini Etudes – selected comparison:

Howard (HYPE) CDA67193

Grand études – selected comparison:

Hamelin (11/02) (HYPE) CDA67370

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

EARLY KEYBOARD RARITIES

Philip Kennicott listens to a trio of recordings of Baroque keyboard works played on period-appropriate instruments



Yago Mahúgo presents French music from around the turn of the 18th century

The strongest of three recent releases from Brilliant Classics, all devoted to keyboard music performed on historically appropriate instruments, turns out to be the recording that documents the least well-known composer. Sebastian de Albero (1722–56), whose career overlapped with both the older Domenico Scarlatti and the younger Antonio Soler, is proved here worthy of comparison to both. Harpsichordist **Alejandro Casal** focuses on one of two of Albero's keyboard collections, the novel and engaging *Obras para clavicordio*, in which the composer mixes free-form recercatas, extended fugues and binary-form sonatas into substantial and historically self-conscious tripartite suites. The recercatas are unmeasured and improvisatory, the fugues dense and sometimes astonishingly long (some lasting 10–12 minutes), the sonatas engaging and spirited, and all of this is colourfully infused with many of the 'Hispanic' touches and rollicking virtuosity that make Scarlatti's sonatas so infinitely pleasing.

Casal is a fine player, vibrant, sensitive and idiomatic, and not at all afraid of the more bumptious irruptions of ornamental dissonance and sharply snapped rhythms that characterise Iberian keyboard music of the time. He brings fluent rhetorical order to the unmeasured ruminations of the recercatas, rigour to the fugues and imagination and colour throughout, especially in the sonatas that complete each of these six hybrid works.

Yago Mahúgo's pairing of suites and miscellaneous short works by Clérambault and Marchand brings together two composers whose major harpsichord works were written just before or after the turn of the 18th century. They prefigure the rising generation of François Couperin, and later Rameau, with detectable echoes of Louis Couperin and d'Anglebert. Neither was a prolific composer for the instrument: Clérambault is best known for his cantatas and only composed the two harpsichord suites included here, plus a short prelude also attributed to him; Marchand was one of the premier organists of his day and wrote only two suites plus a handful of character pieces for the harpsichord.

There is a somewhat severe metrical regularity throughout Mahúgo's playing, even in unmeasured preludes. In the Marchand suites, this is felt as an occasionally appealing stateliness but it often borders on the rigid. Mahúgo's instrument is a modern reproduction based on the 1638 Ruckers, with a very sweet upper manual and a warm but piquant overall tone. His ornamentation is proper and well executed but lacks the fluidity and character of other harpsichordists in this repertoire, most notably Christophe Rousset, whose pairing of Rameau and Marchand (Ambronay, 10/12) offers exceptionally appealing performances of the latter's suites. Rousset's ornamentation is never cluttered or rushed, though it is sometimes combustible; and it serves a more integral and organic purpose,

propelling musical ideas forwards rather than merely underscoring or highlighting them. Andreas Staier has also recorded the Clérambault suite in C minor on his exploration of Baroque melancholy (*Harmonia Mundi*, 5/13), and that reading is also more satisfying than Mahúgo's.

Finally, **Andrea Coen** gathers together the complete keyboard variations of CPE Bach, ranging from pleasing small-scale sets for didactic purposes to larger, more ambitious collections that explore the brilliant extremes of the composer's musical range. Beyond the 12 Variations on the hit tune 'Les folies d'Espagne', most of these works remain relatively little known and few of them have the currency of the 'Prussian' Sonatas of 1742 or the 'Württemberg' Sonatas of 1744. But there are riches aplenty (the 'Folies d'Espagne' set is justly popular with players), and the endearing and sometimes shocking idiosyncrasies of CPE are evident throughout. This recording follows important releases during or close to the 300th anniversary of the composer's death in 2014, including Ana-Marija Markovina's suave (sometimes too much so) traversal of the complete keyboard works on modern piano (Hänssler Classic, 3/15), which included the variations interspersed rather than gathered together.

Coen is sympathetic to the mix of control and wilfulness that makes CPE's music so thrilling but his fortepiano, a modern reproduction based on the Gottfried Silbermann instrument of 1749, wants a bit of taming. Coen's accentuation of musical extremities is admirable but the instrumental palette isn't quite sufficient to ensure that all of them will be beautiful. Long immersion in this double-disc set mitigates the impact of some of the more jarring contrasts and the cumulative effect is a sense of wonder at Bach's range and daring. But this is the rare CPE Bach recording where you may feel the performer's sense of the music needs to be shrunk to fit within the parameters of what is possible on his instrument. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Albero Keyboard Works
Alejandro Casal
Brilliant (S) ② 95187

Clérambault, Marchand Kybd Wks
Yago Mahúgo
Brilliant (B) 94790

CPE Bach Complete Kybd Variations
Andrea Coen
Brilliant (S) ② 95305

Llobet · Manén · Mompou

'Cançons i danses catalanes'

Llobet 13 Cançons populars **Manén** Fantasia-Sonata, Op A-22 **Mompou** Suite compostelana. Cançons i danses – No 10; No 13

Franz Halász gtr

BIS (F) BIS2092 (61' • DDD/DSD)



The Spanish nationalism that saw composers as diverse as Albéniz, Falla and

Rodrigo look to traditional and archaic musics for inspiration and renewal gave rise to a uniquely Catalan strain, which can be heard in the music of the three composers on this recording. And if Frederic Mompou and Miquel Llobet's intimate use of Catalan folk melodies and dances makes them more obvious bedfellows, the German guitarist Franz Halász nevertheless finds in violin virtuoso Joan Manén's expansive *Fantasia-Sonata* 'a clearly folkloric influence'.

Like Mompou's *Suite compostelana*, which opens this recital, the *Fantasia-Sonata* was written for Andrés Segovia. It's a substantial single-movement work of dramatic contrasts that elicits some of Halász's most thrilling and colourful playing. But the Mompou, next in order of scale and substance, receives an equally compelling performance by virtue of Halász's ability to switch gears so convincingly between such movements as the frenetic, toccata-like 'Preludio' and the delicately solemn 'Coral'.

Someone who really knew how to give the guitar a workout was Miquel Llobet, a star pupil of the great Francisco Tárrega. His *Cançons populars* are staples of the guitar repertoire and are replete with frequent changes of register, extensive use of artificial harmonics and glissandos, and mellifluous harmonisations. They are modest, as are Mompou's gorgeous

Cançons i danses Nos 10 and 13. But such is Halász's ear for subtle changes in colour almost from note to note – something Segovia was a master of – that pieces like 'El noi de la mare', 'Cançó del lladre' or 'El testament de n'Amèlia' become more bittersweet remembrances of things past than mere miniatures for salon or studio.

William Yeoman

Schubert

Piano Sonata No 7, D568.

Four Impromptus, D935

Janina Fialkowska pf

ATMA Classique (F) ACD2 2699 (61' • DDD)



Janina Fialkowska previously impressed me with her accounts of Schubert's Sonatas

D664 and 894. Her reading of the E flat major Sonata, D568, is no less compelling, with an unerring sense of architecture and a responsiveness to Schubert's innately unstable moods. Hers is a quiet kind of pianism that doesn't shout 'look at me' yet yields more rewards than many more interventionist players. The slow movement, for instance, has less rhetorical freedom than Barenboim's but to these ears is all the more effective for it, while her outburst at 2'20" (tr 2) has a real vehemence to it, though no one finds as much desolation in this *Andante* as Uchida. 'Naturalness' is the word that comes to mind time and again, and the third movement is a good demonstration of this quality, while Fialkowska's finale has an apt whimsicality compared to which Barenboim sounds somewhat po-faced. Her relatively swift tempo and omission of the repeat (unlike Barenboim and Uchida) also emphasise the fleeting quality of this movement.

It's a similar story with the D935 Impromptus. Others may make more of

the contrast between spiky rhetoric and the assuaging response at the outset of the first, but what Fialkowska delights in is a clarity of narrative. She's also particularly engaging in the more inward moments, not least the No 1's hand-crossing duet against the left hand's murmuring accompaniment – though Lupu is even more rapt here. In No 2, which she launches at an ideally lilting pace, she conveys a kind of symphonic breadth that belies its dimensions, and the inner section rises to a tumultuous pitch.

In the theme that launches the variations of the third, Fialkowska finds a simplicity compared to which Uchida can sound just a touch fey, and she doesn't short-change on the anguish of the minor-key third variation but nor is she tempted to exaggerate. Some find a more unhinged aspect to the edgy Fourth Impromptu (Fischer and Uchida, for instance) but once again Fialkowska lets the music speak for itself, and that brings its own rewards.

Harriet Smith

Piano Sonata, D568 – selected comparisons:

Uchida (2/00⁸) (PHIL) 475 6282PB8

Barenboim (10/14) (DG) 479 2783GH5

Impromptus, D935 – selected comparisons:

E Fischer (9/38⁸) (TEST) SBT1145

Lupu (10/84⁸) (DECC) 460 975-2DM,

478 2340DB10 or 478 8772DB28

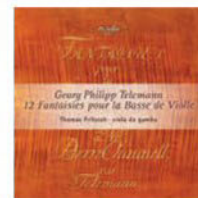
Uchida (5/97⁸) (PHIL) 475 6282PB8

Telemann

12 Fantaisies pour la basse de viole

Thomas Fritzsche va da gamba

Coviello (F) COV91601 (83' • DDD)



Last October it was announced that a copy of Telemann's

12 fantasias for solo

viola da gamba, known to have been published in 1735 but presumed forever lost, had been unearthed in a private

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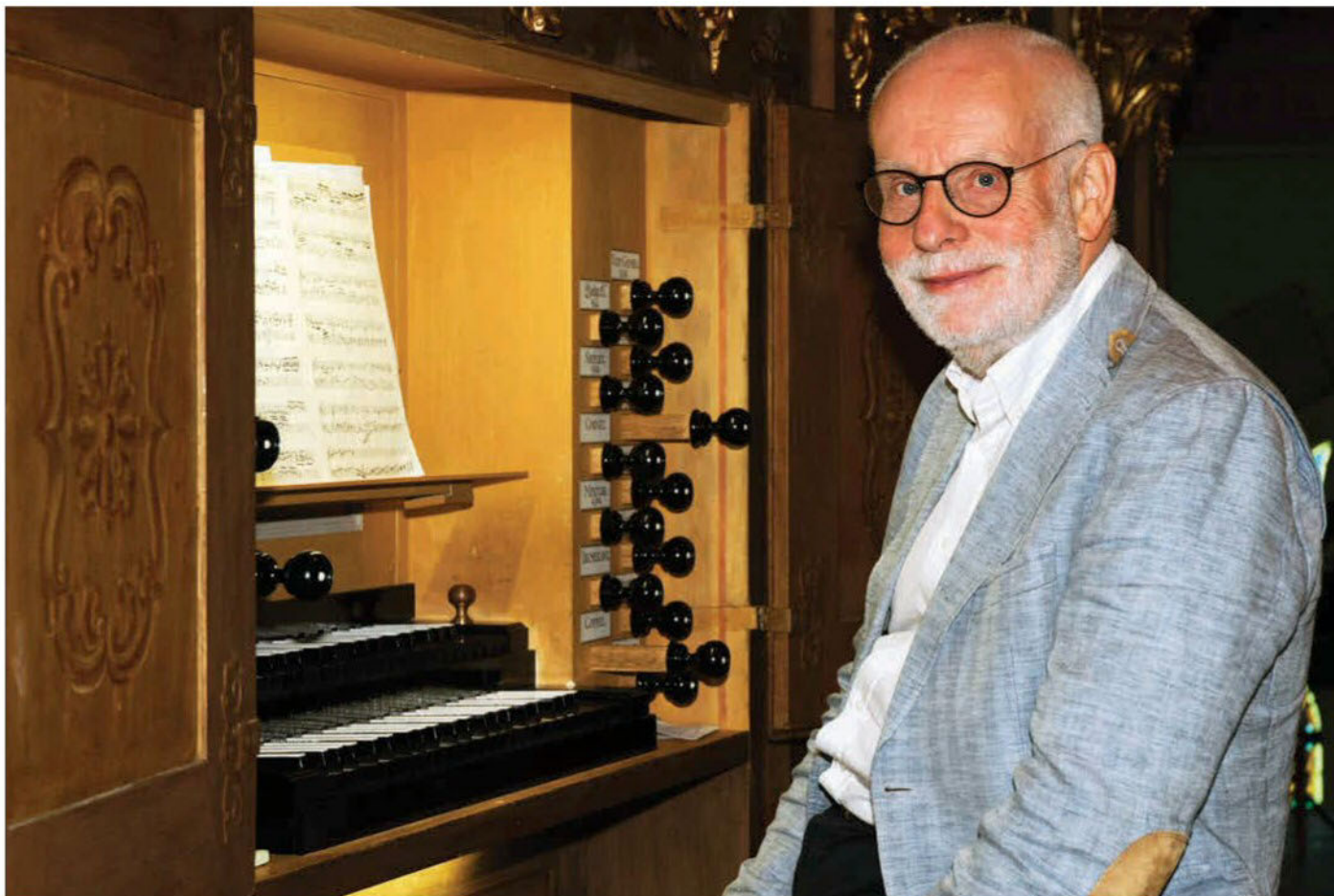
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Ton Koopman: celebrating the restoration of a Saxon organ of Bach's era

collection by the gambist Thomas Fritsch. Their apparent loss had been particularly galling because by 1735 the gamba was well on its way out of fashion, meaning that Telemann would have needed to pull out all his compositional stops if the pieces for this increasingly endangered instrument were to sell. So this premiere recording of the collection, performed by Fritsch himself, feels like a big deal.

The first thing to say is that, musically, these were worth the wait. Telemann presents a cornucopia of broken chords, unison and contrapuntal writing, passagework and even some plucking; there's also a nod to the fashion tussle of the time between the fugal and the *galant* style, with Telemann employing a mixture of the two, much as Bach was to do a few years later with his second book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Frustratingly, though, I can't be as positive about the actual recording, because although the acoustic of the Klosterkirche Zscheiplitz (40 miles west of Leipzig) has lent a lovely balance of warmth and crispness, and although the notes themselves really dance into life under Fritsch's natural, joy-filled playing, this is an instance of close miking gone mad. First there's the

constant patter of fingers hitting wood, even added to at one moment by the ghost of approaching notes as Fritsch's fingers assume their positions (tr 3, 2'11"). Then there's Fritsch's breathing, which contributes an unignorable whistling soundtrack to the whole. These performances would probably be immensely enjoyable in concert. On disc, however, Fritsch has been let down. **Charlotte Gardner**

Lucas Debargue

Chopin Ballade No 4, Op 52 **Grieg** Melody, Op 47 No 3 **Liszt** Mephisto Waltz No 1, S514 **Ravel**

Gaspard de la nuit **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas

- Kk24; Kk132; Kk141; Kk208 **D Scarlatti/**

Debargue Variation I (on Sonata, Kk208)

Schubert Moment musical, D780 No 3

Lucas Debargue *pf*

Sony Classical © 88875 19298-2 (77' • DDD)



Few would argue that the international competition circuit has significantly raised the level of piano-playing worldwide. Yet the high stakes of these musical Olympiads can generate media coverage closer to avid

partisanship than cool-headed reporting. Some of the more memorable competitions owe their notoriety to an outlier contestant who captivated the public and press but failed to win support of the jury. Think of Yuri Egorov at the 1977 Cliburn or Ivo Pogorelich at the 1980 Chopin. Last summer something similar happened at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, when media attention focused less on Dmitry Maslennikov, the gold medalist, than on the fourth-place winner, Lucas Debargue. Sony's release of Debargue's debut recording, recorded live last November at the Salle Cortot in Paris, now provides the opportunity for a calmer assessment.

The recital's centrepiece is *Gaspard de la nuit* in a remarkable reading that exudes drama, colour and atmosphere. Pacing in 'Ondine' is apt, building to the nymph's feigned tears and bitter laughter as she disappears into the lake. The sheer desolation conjured in 'Le gibet' is all the more palpable for its understatement, the barely audible but incessant bell suggesting incipient madness. Debargue deploys his pianistic arsenal with relative abandon in the mercurial 'Scarbo', but it is the cohesion of the triptych that is most striking.

Debargue lavishes great care on the intricate polyphony of Chopin's F minor Ballade, enveloping the piece with a searchingly poetic quality that is quite appealing. Despite his seductively beautiful sound, one is occasionally brought up short by the odd interpretative choice. I'd be willing to put money on the probability that Chopin didn't intend the left-hand trills at 6'00" to signal transition into a mincing *menuet l'antique*. Fortunately such details are rare enough, at least in the Ballade, not to mar the overall impression.

The *Mephisto Waltz*, that piece of Liszt perhaps most deserving of two decades' quiet sabbatical, is also colourful, with vivid contrasts and admirable clarity. However, an almost measure-by-measure overlay of Chopinesque rubato, risky in Liszt, impairs structural integrity and impedes narrative thrust. The exaggerated, accelerating returns to the dance at 8'25" and 12'08" sound contrived, while the counterintuitive coda comes off as glib. Two cosseted miniatures, Grieg's Melody, Op 47 No 3, and Schubert's third *Moment musical* seem freighted with emotional cargo beyond their formal capacities. The Scarlatti group, distant from contemporary consensus about Iberian Baroque style, fails to make much of an impression.

Obviously Lucas Debargue is an intelligent, gifted, imaginative young musician, whose special sense of expressive urgency bodes well for the future. When he indulges a tendency of ferreting out minor details to foreground, his interpretations can sound mannered and arch. That said, his continued growth and achievement will be things to watch. Meanwhile, it's tempting to quote one of Laurie Anderson's admonishing lyrics: 'Just talk normal.'

Patrick Rucker

Ton Koopman

JS Bach Canzona, BWV588. Passacaglia, BWV582. Prelude and Fugue, BWV549. Vater unser im Himmelreich, BWV682. Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, BWVdeest **Buxtehude** Toccata, BuxWV157 **Homilius** Mein Gott, das Herze bring ich dir. O grosser Gott, du reines Wesen **Pachelbel** Ciacona in D minor **Sweelinck** Fantasia in D minor. Puer nobis nascitur **JG Walther** Concerto in F after Albinoni. Herr Gott, nun schliess den Himmel auf

Ton Koopman org

Challenge Classics © CC77264 (70' • DDD)

Played on the Zacharias Hildebrandt organ, Lengefeld, Saxony, Germany



Few organists specialising in the great oeuvres of 17th- and 18th-century

North Europe find such satisfying complicity between the instrument, their musical instincts and programming as Ton Koopman. Taken as a single, unfolding experience, this recital celebrates the recent restoration of pipework from a previous organ of the 1660s now sitting within the hybrid Zacharias Hildebrandt instrument in Lengefeld, Saxony, completed in 1726; Koopman exploits its warm colours with affection and considered enquiry.

Hildebrandt was a maker whom Bach admired, so Koopman has devised a programme of works which span the old-school rincer world of his fellow countryman, Sweelinck, via the nascent Rococo sentiments of Homilius towards the evergreen and incremental wonders of Bach's Passacaglia in C minor. If the Dutchman's D minor Fantasia rather outstays its welcome, it's not because of Koopman's tendency in previous years to over-elaborate; indeed, the sobriety of the small-scale chorale preludes and variations presents a delightful foil to the studied flamboyance of the *stylus phantasticus*, evident in a supremely accomplished sense of timing and shape in the Buxtehude Toccata.

This virtue is extended in Walther's Concerto after Albinoni, bursting with the logic, cohesion and flair that recall Concerto Amsterdam's most alluring essays in the Baroque orchestral sphere. Such music can so easily sound prosaic. The Bach 'tableau' at the end is surprising in its plain speaking. Koopman's historical histrionics and quirkiness – both the biddable and exhausting – are expunged from memory in performances whose character is left as much to the imagination as to imposed gesture.

If not a dazzling programme, its attractive esotericism allows us to view Koopman in a new light. The great Passacaglia is gloriously seasoned and immediate.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

'Neglected Works for Piano'

Almén Piano Sonata, Op 2 **Aulin** Feuille d'album.

Valse élégiaque **Bacewicz** Sonatina **Beach**

Scottish Legend, Op 54 No 1 **Carwithen** Sonatina

Crawford Seeger Prelude No 6, Andante

mystico **Kaprállová** April Preludes, Op 13

Tailleferre Trois Pastorales

Bengt Forsberg pf

dB Productions © DBCD170 (70' • DDD)



'Neglected Works for Piano' is all that the front of Bengt Forsberg's new CD

reveals. The fact that they're all women composers, of varying degrees of obscurity, only becomes plain from the tracklist – a gratifyingly understated approach in an age obsessed with positive-discrimination box-ticking.

Forsberg has long been a master programme planner – how could he be otherwise, having spent so many years sharing a concert platform with the inimitable Anne Sofie von Otter? This is no exception. We begin with Vítězslava Kaprálová, one of the great 'what ifs', who died in 1940 at just 25 from TB. She was a pupil of Martinů and shares his rhythmic verve in the four *April Preludes*. What's also striking is her sureness of voice, the pieces by turn folk-imbued, punchy and wistful, ending with a rhythmically inventive, incisive *Vivo*. Forsberg follows this with Amy Beach's *Scottish Legend*, which also draws on folk influences, though to very different effect. Another strikingly mature work is the Sonatina by Doreen Carwithen (later to be Mrs Alwyn), the product of her twenties, with a scintillating slow movement full of textures that glisten in the air, making the most effective of contrasts with the muscular, toccata-like finale.

Other highlights? There are many, from the Chopinesque *Valse élégiaque* of Valborg Aulin, raptly played by Forsberg, to the B minor Sonata of another Swede, Ruth Almén. She apparently devoted much of her life to teaching but, as Forsberg speculates in his lively notes, 'she seems to have been a singular, strong-willed woman with no wish to please her audiences, if there ever were any.' It's a work of great passion and virtuosity, framed by frenetically driven outer movements. Grażyna Bacewicz is one of the better-known figures here and the 'Oberek' that concludes her Sonatina is infectiously brilliant – and sits surprisingly comfortably alongside the Tailleferre D major *Pastorale* that follows it. The disc ends with Ruth Crawford Seeger's splendidly craggy Sixth Prelude, a work of great power in spite of its brief duration. With a recording as fine as the pianism, this is a terrific disc, heartily recommended.

Harriet Smith

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Nico Muhly

Kate Molleson charts the inexorable rise of Philip Glass's former assistant, who has gone on to become one of the most sought after and commissioned composers of his generation

Nico Muhly is a buzz, a controversy, a zeitgeist. He's a phenomenon beyond the music he writes. A decade ago he was the precocious assistant to Philip Glass; now 34, he's the busiest and most commercially successful classical composer of his generation, central to a movement often called 'indie classical' even if he doesn't much like the term. He has written orchestral and chamber works, film scores, sacred choral music, ballet, opera. He collaborates with major names in pop, indie and electronic music but doesn't buy into descriptions like 'genre-bending' or 'fusion': instead, he says, 'the best sort of interchange between experimental classical music and experimental rock and pop consists of a shared dialogue with the goal of making music'. Björk has described him as 'very clever and snappy'. Glass commends 'a curious ear, a restless listening and a maker of works'.

In person Muhly is sassy, frenetic and ferociously bright. He works fast and talks faster, darting between homes in London and New York and giving the impression of not sleeping all that much. He's fanatical about food — restaurants, ingredients, cooking, eating — and though he balks at the word 'fusion' in an artistic context, there is an obvious

His aptitude for adopting other musical accents makes him an impressively versatile composer

parallel. (Cosmopolitan 21st-century chef who plunders a world of culinary styles; cosmopolitan 21st-century composer who plunders a world of musical styles.) In one interview he likened his own artistic process to 'the controlled improvisatory environment of cooking where you don't aim to make a dish with a name but you aim to feed people.'

Some composers magic up sound worlds that seem to bear little overt resemblance to their own tastes or personalities, but not so with Muhly. His music is as quick and clever as he is, brimming with tropes and tricks. He wears his influences on his sleeve and the result is often a bright blend of American minimalism, English Renaissance and pliant pop beats. His aptitude for adopting other musical accents makes him an impressively versatile composer, but also provides easy fodder for the Muhly naysayers — of which there are plenty. Some question where his own voice sits in among it all. Others accuse his music of being at best pretty, at worst vacuous, portentous, magpie. The composer John Adams has said (and bear in mind that Adams is a major influence on Muhly) that his young compatriot's early works 'could use a little more edge, or a little more violence. At times there is a surfeit of prettiness in Nico's music, and I am not sure it is a good thing for someone so young to be so concerned with attractiveness.'

Muhly grew up in the woods of New England, only child of a French painter mother and an American Egyptologist/

documentary-maker father.

The family spent stints living in Rome and Egypt and young Nico learned piano along with several languages, but he was mainly drawn to Old England — maybe the arcane nostalgia was his form of rebellion in an ultra-liberal household. He joined a boys' choir at the Episcopal church in Providence, Rhode Island, and became infatuated by the Renaissance repertoire he sang there. He has described his fondness for Thomas Weelkes as being 'like a childish celebrity infatuation' and remembers learning Byrd's Christmas motet *Senex puerum portabat* on his first day in the choir: 'it's hard to overstate the importance of that moment to my conception of myself as a musician today.'

After school he moved to New York to study English at Columbia University and composition with Christopher Rouse and John Corigliano at The Juilliard School. While still an undergraduate he landed a job as assistant to Philip Glass — arranging parts of the film score to *The Hours*, which is surely a dream college gig. His breakthrough as a composer in his own right came in 2005 with his *Bright Mass with Canons*, a boisterous throng of imitative polyphony in the footsteps of his heroes Byrd and Weelkes. His debut album 'Speaks Volumes' arrived a year later, floaty cello lines and tinkling celestes recorded with the composer/producer Valgeir Sigurðsson for the hip Reykjavik-based label Bedroom Community.

Muhly's career has since spiralled. Last year saw the premiere of an oratorio about Alan Turing (*Sentences*, for countertenor Iestyn Davies). 'The tone is alternately celebratory and sorrowful,' wrote Tim Ashley in *The Guardian*. 'His post-minimalist, asymmetric rhythms suggest the excitement of intellectual discovery.' His first full-scale opera, *Two Boys*, was co-commissioned by ENO and the Met and premiered in 2011. 'Such is the hype around Nico Muhly that it's difficult to judge this opera squarely,' Rupert Christiansen mused in *The Telegraph*, 'and the fact that it deals with such issues as child abuse and internet morality doesn't make objectivity any easier.' (He went on to call the opera 'a bit of a bore'.) Muhly's third opera, *Marnie*, is due to be premiered in the Met's 2019-20 season.

MUHLY FACTS

Born in 1981 in Vermont

Began learning piano at eight and joined a school choir shortly after; has been hooked on Anglican choral music ever since

Studied English at Columbia University and composition at The Juilliard School

Worked for Philip Glass as a keyboardist, conductor and editor

Collaborated with musicians including Björk, Pekka Kuusisto, Sam Amidon, Hilary Hahn, Sufjan Stevens, Iestyn Davies, Anohni, Mark Padmore and The Tallis Scholars.

In 2011 he became the youngest-ever composer commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera in New York for his opera *Two Boys*.



Language is a constant marvel, plaything and springboard for Muhly. He once said that all his music is about text. Interviews are animated insights into a composer's process and he's not shy of a colourful metaphor or several. His blog is at turns candid, erudite and brassy. Try his summation of Romantic music: 'At its worst, it's like being stuck in conversation with a man muttering professorially into a pint of beer. I would get frustrated playing Beethoven sonatas, thinking: "Yes, I agree that it is raining very hard, and we were talking about this at great length before that sweet part when you wanted to talk about your girlfriend and you cried a little bit, but why can't you just hide under that tarpaulin there instead of staying out in the cold and gnashing your teeth?"'

Muhly acknowledges that his music has gained 'more teeth' in recent years, partially due to his own experiences with mental illness. He has written in some detail about his disillusionment with the American health system's pharmaceutical approach to mental health issues, and described his own treatment as 'an emergency solution to clinical manic depression [which] became a permanent cocktail of medications, taken every day, for 10 chemically-unexamined years'. That blogpost from August 2015 concludes with an aspiration to find, 'through the flashes of fire and reminders of difficulty, a path towards stillness and serenity'. In many respects Muhly's music is on a similar quest. **G**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANA CUBA

MUHLY ON RECORD

Three routes into Muhly's diverse sound world



Mothertongue

Various artists

Bedroom Community

Harpsichords, fey vocals, gurgling coffee machines: Muhly's eclectic second album on the Icelandic

label includes collaborations from viola player Nadia Sirota, folk singer Sam Amidon and producer Valgeir Sigurðsson.



I Drink the Air Before Me

Alex Sopp *fl* Seth Baer *bn* Michael Claville *tbn* Nico Muhly *pf* Nadia Sirota *va* Logan Coale *db* Young People's Chorus of New York / Francisco Nuñez

Decca / Bedroom Community (1/11)

An hour-long episodic dance score for small amplified ensemble of flute, viola, bassoon, trombone, upright bass, piano and electronics. Nervy neo-romantic minimalism.



Two Boys

Sols; Metropolitan Opera Orch & Chorus / David Robertson Nonesuch (11/14)

Muhly's first large-scale opera, recorded live at the Metropolitan Opera in 2013, conducted by David Robertson and starring Alice Coote.

Vocal



Tim Ashley welcomes a disc of songs by Benjamin Godard:

'Christoyannis is superb throughout and proves a natural story-teller in the La Fontaine fables' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



Richard Wigmore on a starrily-cast disc of folksong arrangements:

'Gerhaber sings them with the same care for colour and verbal detail he would bring to Schumann or Mahler' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**

JS Bach

St John Passion, BWV245

Werner Güra *ten* Evangelist Johannes Weisser *bass*

Christus Sunhae Im *sop* Benno Schachtner

countertenor Sebastian Kohlhepp *ten* RIAS Chamber

Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin /

René Jacobs

Harmonia Mundi (F) ② (S) (+ DVD)

HMC80 2236/7 (135' + 53' • DDD • T/t)

DVD: '...Um den Himmel zu verdienen!' René

Jacobs and the recording of Bach's St John Passion



René Jacobs's rethinking of the spatial relationships between choirs,

players and soloists in his recording of the *St Matthew Passion* irritated Jonathan Freeman-Attwood (11/13) – or rather, the studio realisation of it did, along with the unevenness of the solo singing – but even so Jacobs's commitment to that piece, his sure-handed elucidation of its dramatic discourse and deep level of insight were undoubtedly major contributors to a reading of character and integrity. The same can be said of his *St John*. As his booklet-notes and the accompanying DVD reveal, he has given detailed thought to the work's theological threads; and if few listeners will note every symbolic sting, the fact that Jacobs has communicated them to his musicians surely adds to the focus they bring to such familiar music. This, after all, is what we have come to expect from him: a clear and individual vision grounded in careful analysis, boldly and methodically executed.

He uses a 20-strong choir which includes the aria soloists (the bass is Christus as well), who sometimes also form a solo ensemble for textural contrast or as a dramatic intensifier (for instance in crowd choruses), and there is a larger chorus for the chorales, given churchy colour by some boy sopranos. Jacobs arranges them all in a circle with choir and soloists on the right, melody instruments on the left and the continuo and Evangelist in the middle, a set-up that helps separate the work's strands and brings the

winds further into the light, but which means the vocal soloists can sound more recessed than usual.

Being more compact in form and forces than the *St Matthew*, the *St John* perhaps makes it easier to achieve consistency of tone. As ever, Jacobs picks singers to suit his purpose, and all here show a controlled expressive ardency that never allows the performance's emotional coherence to slip. Werner Güra's Evangelist is both elegant and immediate, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin are typically excellent, and while the RIAS Chamber Choir is not as coolly blended an ensemble as some, who says it has to be in a piece where personal involvement counts for so much? Tempi are kept moving but are never rushed, the phrasing is well defined and the fermatas in the chorales are movingly effective as steadying moments of reflection – just enough – before moving on to the next line. It all adds up to a reading of power and intelligence.

This recording is of the final 1749 revision of the *St John* but the CDs come with a handy appendix of the movements from Bach's 1725 version – the one most different from the 'standard', opening with the chorus 'O Mensch, bewein' later used in the *Matthew* – and there is an option to download it whole. **Lindsay Kemp**

JS Bach

St Matthew Passion, BWV244

Tilman Lichdi *ten* Evangelist Christian Immler *bass*

Christus Hannah Morrison *sop* Sophie Harmsen

contr Peter Harvey *bass* Stuttgart Chamber Choir

and Baroque Orchestra / Frieder Bernius

Carus (B) ③ CARUS83 285 (164' • DDD • T/t)

Limited deluxe edition (M) ③ (S) CARUS83 286



Frieder Bernius is a Bachian whose work with his choir and period orchestra in

Stuttgart has quietly made its mark over the years, not least in an especially fine Mass in B minor from 2004 (3/07), whose grip of line in the most complex movements is often

sensationally coherent, and matched by some ravishingly characterised solos.

Bernius's *St Matthew* sets sail with an unforced and naturally inflected imagery, sustained by eloquent accompaniments (wonderfully articulated and balanced bass-lines from the very first bar) and vocal contributions evangelising on the text with refreshing clarity and even a hint of asceticism, such as the unhurried appoggiaturas and bell-like restraint of Hannah Morrison's 'Blute nur'. Indeed, this soon turns into a quite a subtly manipulated way of working: both Tilman Lichdi's even-handed reportage as Evangelist and Christian Immler's resigned Jesus certainly position the narrative in the emotional slow-burn lane.

The details of instrumental signposting are affectingly curated in Bernius's impressive command of the score. Never mannered, the 'tableau' from the foretelling of Peter's denial to his betrayal by Judas unfolds with an inevitable luminosity, reaching its first true point of arrival at 'So ist mein Jesus nun gefangen'; after the metaphysical allusions of this magical duet, Bernius's forces become significantly more animated with the graphic fury of lightning and thunder and the fleeing disciples after the altercation in the garden.

Yet, even with this added viscosity and graphic immediacy, especially in the choral interjections which increasingly carry the action in Part 2, Bernius's trajectory remains frustratingly flat. Part of this stems from Lichdi's inability to make a successful transition from his capable if occasionally wearing Evangelist to over-stretched soloist; how much more assuaging 'Geduld' would have been with a dedicated soloist. More to the point, Bernius struggles to resume his new-found dramatic momentum after underwhelming arias.

In truth, only Peter Harvey's solo contribution can be ranked among the best in the work's formidable discography. 'Mache dich' doesn't quite reach the consuming heights of Matthew Brook for John Butt and the Dunedins but is nonetheless beautifully seasoned and suitably



Soprano Eugenia Boix and countertenor Carlos Mena join Forma Antiqua for a programme built around music by Agostino Steffani (review page 82)

absorbing. There's something pleasingly unaffected about Sophie Harmsen's 'Erbarme dich' but it conveys none of the colour, expressive range or control of Sarah Connolly for Richard Egarr.

This reading ultimately disappoints in its over-containment as drama, despite Bernius's evidently distinctive and often eloquent vision. His attention to detail and ringing ensembles are among the best. If only a little more solo vocal quality and collective release had provided the ingredients to allow it to take on a life of its own.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Selected comparisons:

Dunedin Consort, Butt (8/10) (LINN) CKD354

AAM, Egarr (6/15) (AAM) AAM004

Della Ciaia

Della Ciaia *Lamentationi sagre, plus toccatas*
by **Bernia, Della Ciaia, Galilei and Saracini**

Roberta Invernizzi sop

Laboratorio '600 / Franco Pavan *theo/archlute*

Glossa © 2 GCD922903 (106' • DDD • T/t)



Even diligent Italian Baroque specialists won't know much about Alessandro

Della Ciaia (c1605–c1670), an aristocrat in mid-17th-century Siena reputed to have been a fine singer, harpsichordist and lutenist. His publication *Lamentationi sagre* (Venice, 1650) contains an afterpiece that reveals these sets of monodic Lamentations – three each for the Tenebrae services at dusk on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday – were composed as a favour for Sienese nuns rather than 'for professional reasons or out of ambition'.

One cannot help wondering if the actual manner of accompaniments played by Sienese nuns 400 years ago would have been quite as intricately layered and carefully contrived as the rich palette of continuo instruments (double harp, archlute, theorbo and organ) conjured up by Laboratorio '600. Likewise, at times Roberta Invernizzi's smouldering and dynamically charged singing seems closer to the feistiness of the theatre than the piety of the convent. Naturally, these engrossing qualities are perfectly in accordance with our modern expectations of firm engagement and technical finesse – and Invernizzi's declamatory authority and flexible articulation are well-suited to emotive vocal parts that require mastery of a two-octave range. Spinning melismatic features are delivered with animated passion, such as the elongated musical

expressions of the Hebrew letters that introduce each Lesson. There are potent descriptive features such as chromatic dissonances to illustrate the inconsolable line 'come and see if there is any suffering like my suffering' in the Third Lesson from Maundy Thursday. There is increased musical intensity in vivid passages that describe Jehovah's destruction of the walls and gates of Zion (in the First Lesson for Good Friday) and the turbulent scorch of famine (the oration for Holy Saturday). **David Vickers**

Du Mont

'O Mysterium: Motets & Elévations
pour la Chapelle de Louis XIV'

Allemande grave. Ave regina caelorum.

Desidero te millies. Jesu dulcedo cordium.

Memorare. O aeternae misericors Deus.

O dulcissima. O Mysterium. O praelcelsum.

Quam pulchra es. Sub umbra noctis profundae.

Super flumina Babylonis

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2241 (71' • DDD • T/t)



Henri Du Mont was a key figure at the court of Louis XIV. Born in Flanders in 1610, he

moved to Paris in his late twenties. From 1643 until his death in 1684 he was organist at the Jesuit church of St Paul in the Marais; in 1672 he was appointed Compositeur de la musique to the chapel royal, having been a *sous-maître* since 1663, and he became Maître de la musique to the queen a year later. This admirable recording consists of five *grands motets* and six *élévations* or *petits motets*, all but one published in the 1680s. There is also an instrumental piece, the 'Allemande grave' from Du Mont's first published collection, the *Cantica sacra* of 1652: euphonious, beautifully played, with the bassoon pleasantly prominent in the middle of the texture.

The soloists and chorus in the *grands motets* are complemented by strings and flutes. *Memorare*, like *O dulcissima*, is addressed to the Virgin Mary. Two solo voices begin in stately fashion and then embark on roudels to illustrate running to the Virgin for protection. The chorus maintain this lively approach, with a change of metre for the final exhortation. The bass solo in *O aeternae misericordiae Deus* comes across as rather bland but the performance ends strongly. In the final motet, *Super flumina Babylonis*, the chorus is splendidly vigorous at 'How shall we sing the Lord's song?'

The accompaniment in most of the *élévations* is for continuo only. In *Ave regina*, however, a solo violin can be heard above the all-female vocal lines. *Desidero te millies* and *Quam pulchra es* are two other *petits motets* that dispense with men's voices. Both feature ear-tickling suspensions in the harmony; Caroline Weynants and Caroline Danguin-Bardot are particularly expressive in the latter. *Sub umbra noctis profundae* for solo bass is sung with due solemnity by the deep-voiced Nicolas Brooymans. Sébastien Daucé's direction is lively and sensitive, and the recorded sound is exemplary.

Richard Lawrence

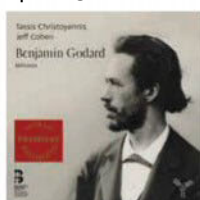
Godard

'Mélodies'

Six Fables de La Fontaine. Nouvelles chansons du vieux temps. Les adieux du berger. Le banc de pierre. Chanson. Chanson du berger. Dieu, qui sourit et qui donne. Elle. Guitare. L'invitation au voyage. Jacotte. Je ne veux pas d'autres choses. Le Ménétrier. Printemps. Si mes vers avaient des ailes. Te souviens-tu

Tassis Christoyannis bar Jeff Cohen pf

Aparté Ⓢ AP123 (72' • DDD • T/t)



Tassis Christoyannis and Jeff Cohen's Benjamin Godard album forms a sequel

to their surveys of Félicien David and Edouard Lalo (2/16) as part of Aparté's series, ongoing one hopes, devoted to the lesser-known 19th-century French song composers. Godard (1849-95) was prolific in the genre, producing over 160 *mélodies* in the course of his shortish career. Most were written before 1876, when he began to gravitate towards larger forms.

Wary of the Wagnerism that infiltrated French music from the 1860s onwards, Godard was something of a traditionalist, in the best sense of the word, preferring strophic forms over experimental word-setting. He was a wonderful melodist, always allowing the vocal line to carry the primary meaning, and his accompaniments, telling if uncomplicated, became more sparse with time: among his last songs 'Message', with which the recital closes, supports the singer with the barest of arpeggiated chords.

The two cycles round which the disc is structured – the *Six Fables de La Fontaine* (1872) and the *Nouvelles chansons du vieux temps* (1874) – recall French 17th-century and Renaissance traditions respectively, both in choice of text and musical allusion. Elsewhere, a discreet eroticism prevails in his choice of Romantic poets, Victor Hugo above all, though he also attempted a setting of Baudelaire's 'L'invitation au voyage', very different from Duparc's more familiar version, both in its urgency of mood and its avoidance of chromatic density.

Christoyannis is superb throughout. He proves a natural story-teller in the La Fontaine fables, with each of the characters, animal or human, subtly yet sharply delineated. The *Nouvelles chansons* glitter with elegance and bawdy wit and his intimate, caressing way with the Hugo and Baudelaire settings is utterly captivating and at times very sexual. Cohen has less chance to shine but plays everything with admirable limpidity and poise. Genuine charm is a rare quality, but it's one that Godard and Christoyannis possess in spades. A beautiful disc, highly recommended. **Tim Ashley**

Machaut

Messe de Notre Dame. Inviolata genitrix/Felix virgo/Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes. Plange, regni respublica/Tu qui gregem tuum ducis/Apprehende arma et scutum et exurge
Graindelavoix / Björn Schmelzer
Glossa Ⓢ GCDP32110 (73' • DDD • T/t)



A new recording of Machaut's Mass is always an event, and this one is compelling

and provocative in equal measure: compelling, because of the beauty of the voices and the evident care that has been lavished on so many details; provocative, because so many of those details will surprise, startle and perhaps infuriate.

Inevitably, these details include the choices of interpretative accidentals (*musica ficta*, to use the convenient shorthand), since very few recordings agree on these. Then there's the choice of sonority, very much the house style of Björn Schmelzer's ensemble, and modelled on Ensemble Organum. It's sometimes informally referred to as 'Corsican goatherds', and although it has its detractors, it has seldom if ever been deployed in polyphony as convincingly as here. Along with a distinctively nasal vocal production, this involves a luxuriant, microtonal approach to ornamentation, most often associated with non-Western chant and folk traditions. To all this Graindelavoix add a deliberately flexible approach to rhythm, which successfully distinguishes between the two main compositional styles deployed by Machaut.

It's very skilfully done: the rapid exchanges between voices (known as *hocket*) sound very fluid and yet perfectly controlled. Even the doubling of voices at the octave (a staple of Paul Van Nevel's work with the Huelgas Ensemble) suggests the timbral mixture of organ registers rather than the gratuitous distortion of the music's syntax. All this comes together in the held chords that punctuate the *Gloria* and *Credo*: Graindelavoix make them come to life from within, and I doubt whether anyone who hears them like this will think of them in quite the same way again.

To be clear: little of this is new, and Schmelzer's suggestions to the contrary account for at least some of his critics' resistance; that, and his tendency to pitch his arguments from a conceptual high-ground that is notably short on details, thus antagonising 'specialists' but also (more importantly, and as I suspect) frustrating the well-intentioned layman. Graindelavoix would be unthinkable without the pioneering work of Marcel Pérès (as Schmelzer concedes); but whereas Ensemble Organum's recording of this Mass was something of an ugly duckling, I've seldom heard a recording of polyphony that synthesises these elements so persuasively. It's the sort of performance that ought to get anyone excited about early music. The rest of the disc (including the two motets thrown in for good measure) is equally arresting. For now at least, this sceptic's been won over. **Fabrice Fitch**

Messe de Notre Dame – selected comparison:

Ens Organum, Pérès (2/97^{re}) (HARM) HMG50 1590



Sébastien Daucé and Ensemble Correspondances present motets by Henri Du Mont on their latest disc for Harmonia Mundi

Mendelssohn

Elias, Op 70

Marlis Petersen *sop* Lioba Braun *mez*

Maximilian Schmitt *ten* Thomas Oliemans *bar*

RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik
Berlin / Hans-Christoph Rademann

Accentus © 2 ACC30356 (126' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Berlin, July 2015



This is the third period-instrument *Elijah* (or *Elias*, as it must be here) on the market.

No less than the predecessors conducted by Philippe Herreweghe and Paul Daniel, its merits are many. Hans-Christoph Rademann's own direction, for starters: lively, with a terrific swing to the Baal choruses and a solid pulse for the Baroque pillars surrounding each part of the work.

The orchestra is more full-bodied than its rivals, with a perfectly healthy string contingent of 9.9.7.6.4, a pair of assertive trumpets and a rasping ophicleide. Perhaps Rademann is less concerned than Herreweghe to pull out the many felicities of Mendelssohn's original orchestration – trombones play a largely supporting role in the big choruses – but he is more prepared

to cultivate legato phrases, which impart to the concerted vocal numbers a flow as smooth as the brook of Kidron itself. It's too bad that the individual members of the RIAS Chamber Choir who step forward for these are not properly identified; the top soprano in particular catches the ear for her graceful phrasing and silvery tone.

The live recording places the listener about halfway back in the stalls: ideal in some ways but lacking the last measure of impact and dynamic variation. The chorus make every word count, as much as the acoustic and the engineers let them. Accordingly their hectic fugues and roused-rabble moments are more engaging than the more tender choruses, especially to be found in the latter stages of what is, after all, a meditative conclusion at provocative odds with much of the preceding fire and brimstone.

More of an issue is the flattened perspective on the principal singers, who are so much more than pious oratorio soloists and have parts to play in a sacred concert-hall drama. Thomas Oliemans is a sympathetic Prophet, more at ease in the company of the widow than raging at Ahab, and bringing everyone around him for 'Es ist genug', which is as soul-searching as its Bachian origins deserve and further intensified by some searing pure tone from

the Berlin Akademie strings. Maximilian Schmitt is reedy as, I suppose, all Obadiahs must be. Perhaps taking her cue from the prominence Mendelssohn gives the contralto, following Bach in his Passions, Lioba Braun is a more assertive presence, positively demanding pity as the Widow before chewing the scenery as the wicked Queen. The unpromising Angel's lot falls to Marlis Petersen, reliably sweet and smiling of timbre: a Pre-Raphaelite to the imposing, Giotto-like minister of grace realised by Renée Fleming (Decca).

If you must have *Elijah*, you must have Daniel. Owners of Herreweghe's set will rest content; but, for a stylish and full-blooded *Elias*, there is much to recommend Rademann. **Peter Quantrill**

Selected comparisons:

Herreweghe (11/93⁸) (HARM) HMY292 1463/4

Daniel (9/97) (DECC) 455 688-2DH2

Monteverdi

'Messa a quattro voci et salmi di 1650, Vol 1'

Cavalli Magnificat Monteverdi Beatus vir a 7.

Confitebor tibi Domine (secondo) a due voci.

Dixit Dominus (primo) a 8. Laudate pueri a 5.

Laetaniae della Beata Vergine a 6. Laetatus sum

a 5. Lauda Jerusalem a 3. Nisi Dominus a 3

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro © COR16142 (71' • DDD • T/t)

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

CHORAL MUSIC FROM SIGNUM

Alexandra Coghlan listens to the latest releases from a label that is making a speciality of college and professional choirs



Tenebrae, the 'choral jewel' in Signum's crown, recording music by Alexander L'Estrange under Nigel Short

Founded in 1997, Signum has an eclectic approach to repertoire, covering everything from opera to early music and even jazz. But recently something of a specialism has begun to emerge. Choral music is occupying an ever-growing portion of the label's catalogue, thanks to some canny signings; and, with a stable of largely homegrown ensembles ranging from Oxbridge college choirs to professional chamber choirs, the label is beginning to rival near-contemporary Delphian for the quality of its output. Signum's current roster includes many excellent ensembles but the choral jewel in the crown is surely Tenebrae – Nigel Short's outstanding chamber choir. Two new albums released this month give some idea of the group's breadth and chameleon-like capacity for reinvention.

Sun, Moon, Sea and Stars sees Tenebrae transform into a close-harmony group for arrangements and originals by Bob Chilcott. Featuring everything from folksongs to popular songs and even a piece of Walton ('Touch her soft lips and part'), there's an exhilarating democracy to a recital in which so many genres collide, and Chilcott's distinctive way with an arrangement ensures things remain coherent. Chilcott's light touch and deft adjustments are at their best in Gershwin's 'Fascinatin' rhythm', which is all insouciant charm and ease, and

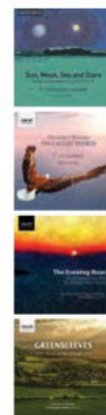
'She's like the swallow', where restraint is everything. But it's the composer's originals that really stand out. His exquisite *Thou, my love, art fair* gains new warmth and fervour here, and *Even such is time* is another reminder of his instinct for melody. This album may be new repertoire for the group but in many ways it's classic Tenebrae – faultless tuning, perfect blend, pure soprano sound, all beautifully recorded.

On Eagles' Wings finds the group back on home territory, with an album devoted to the choral music of Alexander L'Estrange. Although by no means the first British composer championed by the choir (who have music by Meallor, Dove and Todd in their catalogue), L'Estrange is among the least recorded, so a whole programme of his works is a welcome opportunity to listen beyond his ubiquitous *Zimbe!*. In his booklet-notes, L'Estrange tells how he got in trouble as a treble for adding a ninth to the final chord of Howells' *A Spotless Rose*. It's a perfect musical symbol of L'Estrange's own works, which add a jazz-infused chordal depth and a roving harmonic eye to Howells's declamatory muscularity and modal palette. It's attractive, approachable music, with nothing contrived or patronising about it. Standouts include the *New College Service* (ecstatic clustery beauty) and the simplicity of his *Panis angelicus*. This is sacred music written to be used and Tenebrae make excellent advocates for it.

Every label has its flagship Oxbridge choir these days: Delphian has Merton, Hyperion has Trinity, Cambridge, while their neighbours at Clare are with Harmonia Mundi. Signum's choice is Jesus, Cambridge – a canny one, as, in addition to its ancient, all-male choir, it also has a mixed-voice college choir. Music director Mark Williams gets two ensembles for the price of one and both feature on the new album **The Evening Hour**. The disc is a sampler of 'British Choral Music from the 16th to the 20th Centuries' but the emphasis is firmly on the latter period – something we're seeing a lot from Signum's ensembles. Williams's choices are wide-ranging, with some lush wallowing from Balfour Gardiner, Harris and Bairstow but also more bracing contributions from Philip Moore and Lennox Berkeley. If Jesus's women don't quite have the clarity and depth of tone of Trinity's or Clare's, they have a delicacy and a musical responsiveness that's particularly suited to this softer-edged programme of evening music.

You never know quite what to expect from an Armonico Consort release. Something of a moveable feast, this ensemble's shifting personnel means that discs can vary wildly in quality. Their recent *Dido and Aeneas* (also on Signum, 8/15) was successful to a degree that **Greensleeves**, their new album of British folksongs, many in delicate arrangements by Geoffrey Webber, simply isn't. Quite what Stanford's *The Blue Bird* or Pearsall's *Lay a garland* are doing in this collection is unclear but both are so slow as to lose much sense of line of architecture. The folksongs themselves fare better but do expose a lack of refinement in the choral blend, and a tone that pushes too hard at the top and lacks coherence through the parts. Best are solo contributions from soprano Eloise Irving and tenor Matthew Vine, who take the lead in the exquisite opener, *Lisa Lân*. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Chilcott Sun, Moon, Sea and Stars
Tenebrae / Nigel Short
Signum © SIGCD903

L'Estrange On Eagles' Wings
Tenebrae / Nigel Short
Signum © SIGCD454

Various Cpsrs The Evening Hour
Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge /
Mark Williams Signum © SIGCD446

Various Cpsrs Greensleeves
Armonico Consort / Chrisopher Monks
Signum © SIGCD447



'Fully inside Monteverdi's style': La Compagnia del Madrigale turn their hand to some of the composer's less well-known sacred output



Posthumous prints of music by the recently deceased often consist of offcuts and

dredgings-up from the bottom of the drawer, not to say spurious pieces. Published in 1650, seven years after Monteverdi's death, the *Messa a quattro voci et salmi* is an exception, its contents fine enough to have secured a foothold on disc. Here, The Sixteen plug a gap in the current discography by offering the entire set (a companion volume is anticipated). They include Cavalli's fine *Magnificat*, which appears in the print but was omitted on the only previous 'complete' recording of which I am aware (in any case no longer readily available).

The Sixteen's complete recording of the *Selva morale* collection has been praised in these pages, and the qualities of ensemble are certainly worth noting here also. They are heard to best effect in the more richly scored pieces: the five-voice *Laetatus sum* and *Laudate pueri*, for example, or the Cavalli *Magnificat*. That said, one misses the incisiveness of earlier interpretations in similar repertory (the Taverner Consort, notably, or more recently Concerto

Italiano), or of much of The Sixteen's own *Selva* volumes. Much the same might be said of the pieces for vocal duos and trios: The Parley of Instruments for Hyperion with Emma Kirkby, Ian Partridge and David Thomas polished some of these off with more gusto, and rather more cleanly (though The Sixteen's two basses acquit themselves with greater credit). These are serviceable accounts but not quite the finished article. **Fabrice Fitch**

Monteverdi

Frescobaldi Two Toccatas **Monteverdi** Il pianto della Madonna. Letaniae della Beata Vergine.

Selva morale e sprituali - È questa vita un lampo. Spiritual contrafacta - Adoramus te, Christe. Cantate Domino. Christe, adoramus te. Domine, ne in furore tuo. Maria, quid ploras. Pulchrae sunt genae tuae. Qui pependit in cruce. Qui pietate tua. Rutilante in nocte. Stabat virgo Maria. Te, Iesu Christe

La Compagnia del Madrigale

Glossa © GCD922805 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Most of Arianna's Lament from Monteverdi's lost opera *Arianna* (1608)

survives in his Sixth Book of Madrigals (1614) as a five-voice madrigal; and it appears again in his *Selva morale* (1640) as a solo – which is surely what Monteverdi originally wrote – but with a sacred Latin text, *Iam moriar, mi fili*. The novelty on this issue is that Giuseppe Maletto has applied that sacred text to all five voices of the Sixth Book version. The result is a magnificent 'new' sacred motet by Monteverdi lasting over 15 minutes. The remainder of the disc focuses on the less well-known corners of Monteverdi's sacred output, including sacred retextings by Aquilino Coppini of famous madrigals and five motets only known from Giulio Cesare Bianchi's two publications of 1620, ending with the large *Letaniae della Beata Vergine*.

But the main virtue of this issue is obviously the singing of La Compagnia del Madrigale, a group that essentially began life in Claudio Cavina's group La Venexiana and became independent in 2009 as Cavina's career moved more into opera. This is a superb ensemble, with the wonderful Rossana Bertini as first soprano and with Maletto perhaps as the guiding force, though they identify no 'leader' as such. Their sound is beautifully focused, with just enough expression to make the best of the music without exaggerating

anything. What is also clear is that they are all fully inside Monteverdi's style and his music; and after earlier discs devoted to Marenzio and Gesualdo it is very good to welcome these musicians back into the world of Monteverdi. The sound quality and the presentation are admirably clear.

David Fallows

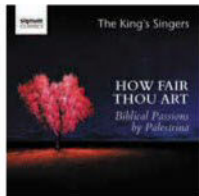
Palestrina

'How Fair Thou Art – Biblical Passions'

Alma redemptoris mater. Ave regina coelorum. Descendi in hortum meum. Ecce tu pulcher es. Nigra sum, sed formosa. Osculetur me. Pulchrae sunt genae tuae. Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui. Regina coeli. Salve regina. Sicut lilium inter spinas (two versions). Surge, propera amica mea. Tota pulchra es anima mea. Trahe me, post te. Veni, veni dilecte mi

The King's Singers

Signum ⑤ SIGCD450 (55' • DDD • T/t)



Several complete recordings exist of Palestrina's sacred madrigal cycle on the

biblical Song of Songs. For this reason, perhaps, The King's Singers have chosen to intersperse a selection of its contents with settings of the four Marian antiphons. The juxtaposition of sacred and secular would not have troubled Palestrina's contemporaries, and the inclusion of the antiphons imparts a variety that the madrigal cycle on its own might not quite manage. They also number among the recording's finest performances, and all are nicely contrasted in terms of scoring. The four-voice *Ave regina celorum* includes only the tenors and basses – a strikingly individual texture – while the concluding *Salve regina* is an extended setting more richly scored than anything else heard here.

At its best, The King's Singers' sweetness of tone seems perfectly to match the sense of the text. The decision to break up the cycle allows them to vary the scoring from one madrigal to the next: at times both countertenors take the top line, which yields a novel sonority. It also permits a greater flexibility of tempo between madrigals, some being noticeably faster than others. All this is perfectly justifiable on its own terms, since it is far from certain that Palestrina would have envisaged performing the cycle at one sitting. If there is one possible criticism, it is the elusiveness of the madrigal quality in the cycle ('sacred', yes, but they're still madrigals). To be fair, it's a problem that few if any recorded interpretations of the set have convincingly accounted for (unlike the

performances of that other great madrigal cycle of the time, Lassus's *Lagrime di San Pietro*), but, given this ensemble's admirable versatility, it is surprising that they don't address it more directly. **Fabrice Fitch**

Purcell/Britten

'Purcell Songs Realised by Britten'

Ruby Hughes *sop* Anna Grevelius *mez* Robin Blaze

countertenor Allan Clayton *ten* Benedict Nelson *bar*

Matthew Rose *bass* Joseph Middleton *pf*

Champs Hill ② CHRC106 (142' • DDD • T)



Is this set for lovers of Purcell or Britten? Or perhaps both? Now that we have ample

opportunity to hear Purcell's music in period performances, the work Britten did to bring his forebear's music back into circulation has taken on a secondary level of interest, like Handel revised by Mozart or Mendelssohn. The Britten realisations of vocal solos and duets (plus one trio) from *Orpheus Britannicus* and *Harmonia sacra* add up to just the right length for two well-filled CDs. Hyperion recorded them complete with an all-star line-up in 1995. Champs Hill's new set is equally complete and, if anything, the more persuasive of the two.

Ever the practical musician, Britten knew what would work in performance. His realisations of 'The Queen's Epicedium' and 'Fairest isle' from *King Arthur*, two of the earliest, dating from the 1940s, are quite frugal, adding little that is not suggested in the original. Even the complex harmonies of 'When Myra sings' are mostly Purcell's own. Some of the others, though, undergo full-scale Britten-isation. One of the most extreme is 'Music for a while', which adds sound effects for the dropping snakes and the crack of the whips, and ends like overblown Brahms – enough, I have always felt, to set my teeth on edge and send me running back to Purcell's original.

Maybe not any more. The mellifluous Allan Clayton and pianist Joseph Middleton make no apologies for it. The colours they bring to the music are unashamedly Romantic and Middleton, whose vivid playing is a catalyst throughout the disc, lets himself go in Britten's scene-painting. This seems to me to work better than Graham Johnson's decorous approach on Hyperion. Similarly, 'Sweeter than roses', another of Britten's more interventionist settings, is lovingly treated by countertenor Robin Blaze.

Champs Hill's six singers are not necessarily preferable to Hyperion's nine big names – Ruby Hughes's soprano

sometimes feels on the shallow side, Clayton sounds stressed in the trio and Benedict Nelson struggles with the fast-moving 'I'll sail upon the dog-star' – but overall their performances have just as much to offer. The two sopranos, Hughes and Anna Grevelius, are nicely contrasted. Clayton and Nelson play off each other well in their duets. Matthew Rose is outstanding in each of his tracks, authoritative and unfussy. Champs Hill's recording is also first-rate, giving singers and piano alike tremendous presence. For Purcell, I will still look to period performances. For Britten, this counts as a highly persuasive new release.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparison:

Johnson et al (11/95^R) (HYPE) CDD22058

Satie

Trois Mélodies. Trois Autres

Mélodies. Hymn. Socrate

Barbara Hannigan *sop* Reinbert de Leeuw *pf*

Winter & Winter ⑤ 910 234-2 (50' • DDD)



This celebratory nod towards the 150th anniversary of Erik Satie's birth aptly

demonstrates something that every Satie aficionado ought to feel instinctively: the more you actively do to a Satie score – glosses of quasi-Romantic rubato and allied generic expressive artifice present a particular problem – the further the music is distanced from its gestural and spiritual essence.

Throughout their album, Barbara Hannigan and Reinbert de Leeuw maintain a very noticeable consistency of mood, atmosphere and colour. The coolly detached house style of Winter & Winter has been respected but an aesthetic decision has clearly been taken to represent Satie as a creative lone wolf – as an early adopter of theories about harmonic narratives symbolising little apart from the sound of harmony itself which John Cage began to preach during the 1950s, a view that befits a label that has variously immersed itself in the compositional objectivity of Cage, Mauricio Kagel and, most recently, Hans Abrahamsen (and decides to put texts online rather than print them as part of the physical edition).

De Leeuw recorded *Trois Mélodies, Trois Autres Mélodies* and *Hymne* with the Dutch soprano Marianne Kweksilber in 1976 but these new readings speak of Satie's deep mysteries with extra intensity. The introverted discretion of de Leeuw's pianism is weighted to perfection during



Soprano Ruby Hughes is just one of the singers to join pianist Joseph Middleton on Champ's Hill's new set of Britten's Purcell realisations

the six *Mémoires*. As a corrective to that ingrained habit of hairpinning through a rising melodic line, Satie doggedly restates *pp* in the opening song, 'Les anges'. And when faithfully realised, as now, the music folds inwards as expressive archetypes are required to function against type.

As with Satie's notorious *Vexations* (to which *Hymne* is closely allied harmonically), once you manage to override *Socrate's* apparently faceless surface, all sorts of unforeseeable delights are revealed. Suzanne Danco's 1937 performance (Darius Milhaud conducting the orchestral version) oozes period charm, it's true. But Barbara Hannigan, with her flawless enunciation and steadiness of control in the upper register, skilfully removes any hint of operatic grandstanding; and, with de Leeuw skulking in the harmonic shadows, you witness the anonymity of the lines she sings being achieved through ingenious, riddle-like harmonic sidesteps – Satie already teasing with that Cageian ideal of persevering until 'one discovers that it is not boring at all'.

Philip Clark

Schubert

Schwanengesang, D957. *An die Musik*, D547. *Auf der Bruck*, D853. *Die Forelle*, D550. *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus*, D583

James Rutherford *bar* Eugene Asti *pf*
BIS (E) BIS2180 (70') • DDD/DSD • T/I



Right from the start, this *Schwanengesang* has two major virtues that should come as

no surprise to anyone aware of James Rutherford's pedigree. The British baritone was a BBC New Generation artist before heading to the continent, where he has been a stalwart of many an important opera house in the German-speaking world – a longtime ensemble member in Graz, a Bayreuth Hans Sachs, as well as Mandryka on Challenge Classics' recent *Arabella*. He has at his disposal a wonderfully healthy and rounded bass-baritone voice (listen to that smooth, inexorable descent to a low F sharp in the first phrase of 'Kriegers Ahnung'), and his German is impeccable.

Downward transpositions and voice type – in all senses – play a major role in how these songs come across, though, and initial impressions are of a rather too easy-going and mellow Wanderer, an impression underlined by a slight lack of urgency in Eugene Asti's accompaniment (as the

triplets kick in at 3'08" in that same 'Krieger's Ahnung', for example, or in a rather too jolly 'Frühlingssehnsucht'). But the cycle has a slow-burn cumulative power, and if Rutherford's tone – occasionally a touch nasal but essentially benign in its ruddy, plump-cheeked healthiness – can't communicate the tortured grandeur of the young Bryn Terfel, his interpretation grows in emotional urgency as it progresses. 'Ständchen' is touchingly gentle, while there's a real sense of raging passion underlying 'Aufenthalt' and 'Herbst'. He builds up a palpable sense of gravitas in 'In der Ferne' and noble tragedy in 'Der Atlas', where the voice is let impressively off the leash. One misses a hard edge, perhaps, in 'Der Doppelgänger', but this is similarly impressive and dramatically convincing, and phrased beautifully in its hushed – but still properly sung – final phrases.

The disc is filled out with a somewhat arbitrary but nevertheless welcome quartet of favourites, of which a wonderfully buoyant and garrulous 'Die Forelle' is a highlight. A very fine singer on fine form, then, an honest, beautifully crafted interpretation, and a *Schwanengesang* that's well worth seeking out, especially for those seeking an alternative to Florian Boesch's

rather more interventionist recent account.

Hugo Shirley

Schwanengesang – selected comparisons:

Terfel, Martineau (5/92) (SAIN) SCDC4035

Boesch, Martineau (1/15) (ONYX) ONYX4131

Zelenka

Missa Divi Xaverii, ZWV12.

Litaniae de Sancto Xaverio, ZWV156

Hana Blažiková *sop* **Lucile Richardot, Kamila**

Mazalová *contrs* **Václav Čížek** *ten* **Stephan**

MacLeod *bass* **Collegium Vocale 1704;**

Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks

Accent ⑤ ACC24301 (72' • DDD • T/t)



Václav Luks's reconstruction of Zelenka's *Missa Divi Xaverii*, edited

painstakingly from the damaged autograph manuscript, has just been published by Bärenreiter. The Mass was performed at the court chapel in Dresden on December 3, 1729, on the feast day of St Francis Xavier, a 16th-century Jesuit missionary to India and Japan. It dates from exactly the time when Zelenka had futile hopes to succeed the recently deceased Heinichen as kapellmeister. He might have also had one eye on the fact that the feast of St Francis Xavier coincided with the nameday of the crown prince's devout wife Maria Josepha, who particularly venerated the saint.

Collegium 1704's blithe performance conveys a radiant mood in the opening strains of 'Kyrie eleison'; the solo quartet's plea for mercy carries through to a shapely choral response adorned by four relaxed trumpets. Hana Blažiková's limpid singing produces a gorgeous dialogue with a violin and oboe d'amore in 'Benedictus', and her duet with Kamila Mazalová in 'Domine Deus' is a charming pastoral featuring two bubbling flutes. Lucile Richardot's rapt 'Agnus Dei' is accompanied gently by delicate solo flute and pulsing strings. 'Quoniam tu solus sanctus' is a fluid quartet that seems closer to Mozart than to Bach, not least on account of its introductory ritornello juggling a trio of flutes and violas on the one hand, and another trio of oboes and bassoon on the other, while trumpets make surprisingly subtle interjections.

From the heartfelt piety of 'Qui tollis peccata mundi' to the thrilling rising sequences at the climax of the Sanctus ('Hosanna in excelsis'), the choral singing is immaculate. The marginally more compact *Litaniae de Sancto Xaverio*, also written for the 1729 festivities, has an unusually theatrical impact – especially when a pair of

horns let rip in the flamboyant quartet 'Tuba resonans', and when the verses refer to the saint giving aid to the shipwrecked and expelling demons in the fantastic chorus 'Auxiliator naufragantium'.

David Vickers

'Bien que l'amour...'

d'Ambruys Le doux silence de nos bois

La Barre Quand une âme est bien atteinte

M-A Charpentier Auprès de feu, H446. Ayant

bu du vin clair, H447. Beaux petits yeux

d'écarlate, H448. Intermèdes nouceaux du

Mariage forcé, H494 **F Couperin** Epitaphe d'un

paresseux: Jean s'en alla comme il était venu.

Les pèlerines **Lambert** Ah! Qui voudra

désormais s'engager?. Bien que l'amour fasse

toute ma peine. Chantez, petits oiseaux dans

la saison nouvelle. D'un feu secret je me sens

consumer. Il est vrai, l'amour est charmant.

Il faut mourir plutôt que de changer. Iris n'est

plus, mon Iris m'est ravie. Jugez de ma douleur

en ces tristes adieux. Pour vos beaux yeux, Iris,

mon amour est extrême. Que d'Amants séparés

languissent nuit et jour. Le repos, l'ombre, le

silence. Tout l'univers obéit à l'amour

Les Arts Florissants / William Christie *hpd*

Harmonia Mundi ⑤ HAF890 5276 (80' • DDD • T/t)



Before and after the turn of the 17th century, hundreds of collections of *Airs*

sérieux et à boire were published in Paris. In the first of a new series for their old label, Les Arts Florissants present a varied selection of these airs: mostly ensemble pieces, with a sprinkling of solo numbers. Two violins and a gamba support five singers, abetted by a continuo group comprising theorbo and harpsichord.

Of the 20 tracks, 12 are by Michel Lambert, the singer and teacher who became Maître de musique de la chambre du Roi in 1661; his daughter married the all-powerful Lully a year later. All but the last, *Tout l'univers obéit à l'Amour*, are *sérieux* indeed, lamenting lost or hopeless love. One of the most moving is *Iris n'est plus*, sung with great intensity by Cyril Auvity. *Chantez, petits oiseaux*, to words by Lully's librettist Philippe Quinault, is lightened by delightful counterpoint from the theorbo of Thomas Dunford. *Jugez de ma douleur*, a man's reproach to another Iris, is oddly split between soprano and tenor; the seal is set on the lover's misery by a heartfelt postlude on the gamba.

In fact the instrumental contributions are superb throughout. *Le doux silence* by Honoré d'Ambruys has an interlude for the gamba, which then vies with the singer in

the ornate second verse: it's all beautifully played by Myriam Rignol. But the lighter numbers are less successful. Couperin's *Epitaph of a Lazy Man* is brief and amusing but the other items make you feel as though you are eavesdropping on a party to which you haven't been invited.

Charpentier's interludes for Molière's *Le mariage forcé* end with raucous laughter; the New Chamber Opera's version is both more restrained and more entertaining (ASV, 4/98). It would perhaps have been better to issue a DVD of one of the semi-staged concerts that Les Arts Florissants have been touring, to be watched after a good dinner: apropos of which, somebody should have informed the German translator of the texts that claret is not a white wine. **Richard Lawrence**

'Crudo Amor'

Corbetta Passachaglia **JCF Fischer** Passacaglia

Kapsberger Toccata terza **Steffani** Begl'occhi,

oh Dio, non più piangete. Crudo Amor, morir me

sento. Dimmi, dimmi, Cupido. Occhi, perché

piangete?. Placidissime catene. Sol negl'occhi

del mio bene

Eugenia Boix *sop* **Carlos Mena** *counterten*

Forma Antiqua / Aarón Zapico *hpd*

Winter & Winter ⑤ 910 231-2 (57' • DDD • T/t)



If the music of Agostino Steffani is no longer a complete unknown (thanks

largely to the efforts of Cecilia Bartoli and recent productions of the opera *Niobe*), his music still isn't exactly mainstream, even in the early music world. Normally this might betray some weakness, some fatal flaw in the music, but you can search all you like and you'll find nothing but instinctive emotional expression and bold dramatic writing in Steffani's output. Even Charles Burney was a fan. Some have speculated that the composer's unusual life – spent largely in Germany, working not just as a musician but as a diplomat, bishop and probably spy – may account for it, preventing Italy from taking ownership of music that taught the young Handel a lot of what he knew. But whatever the truth, Steffani is long overdue a comeback and not just in the opera house.

This new album by the Spanish soprano Eugenia Boix and countertenor Carlos Mena puts the composer's chamber duets in the spotlight, with the help of Aarón Zapico and Baroque ensemble Forma Antiqua. Filling the gap between Monteverdi and Carissimi and the later works of Telemann and Handel, these miniatures are packed

with musical drama, and make for a thrilling and varied recital. Sections of athletic counterpoint give way to languorous suspension-filled exchanges between the two voices, with *accompagnato* recitative leading into full *da capo* arias. These really are operas for the salon. 'Begl'occhi, oh Dio' and the title-work, 'Crudo Amor', are among the most attractive multi-movement works vividly championed here by Boix and Mena, balancing vocal beauty and drama with characterful support from Zapico and his musicians. The instruments are very present in the mix throughout, and it's a balance that works well for chamber music where the voices offer only part of the interest.

This album might not singlehandedly set that Steffani revolution in motion but it's a big step in the right direction.

Alexandra Coghlan

'FolksLied'

Beethoven Schottische Lieder, Op 108^a - No 2, Sunset; No 3, Oh! sweet were the hours; No 13, Come fill, fill, my good fellow!; No 16, Could this ill world; No 20, Faithfu' Johnie **Britten** At the mid hour of night. Avenging and bright. Ca' the yowes. Dear Harp of My Country. How sweet the answer. The Miller of Dee. O can ye sew cushions?. Sally in our alley **Haydn** Es weiden meine Schafe, HobXXIa/153^a. Fliess leise mein Bächlein, HobXXXIa/253^a. Ich stehe auf der Heide, HobXXXIb/27^a. Im Schlummern, da kam ich einst zu dir, HobXXXIb/36^a. Rose weiss, Rose rot, HobXXXb/10^a. Ein Wanderer kommt von ferne, HobXXXIb/3^a

Christian Gerhafer bar^a **Anton Barachovsky** vn

Sebastian Klinger vc **Gerold Huber** pf

BR-Klassik © 900131 (54' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Prinzregententheater, Munich, March 7, 2013



In the 1770s the gloomy, mist-shrouded musings of the Gaelic bard

'Ossian' – later revealed as the century's greatest literary fraud – fuelled a Europe-wide craze for Celtic primitivism. Haydn, Beethoven and others duly cashed in on the insatiable demand for folksong arrangements, adorned and 'civilised' for the salon, in what, kreutzer per hour, was surely the most lucrative work of their careers. Using the early-20th-century cod-folk German poems attached to Haydn's folksongs, Christian Gerhafer sings them with the same care for colour and verbal detail he would bring to a Schumann or Mahler song. His acerbic pointing of the text minimises the

incongruity between words (doleful and/or embittered) and music (jolly) in 'Im Schlummern' and 'Ich stehe auf der Heide'. In a brief booklet-note Gerhafer pays homage to Fritz Wunderlich's recordings of Haydn folksongs (DG, 1/89). His impeccable enunciation and, where apt, tenderly spun legato – say, in 'Rose weiss, Rose rot' – are indeed worthy of the great, short-lived tenor.

Whereas Haydn's trio accompaniments are gracefully decorative, Beethoven, true to form, can't resist touches of motivic development in his more elaborate Scottish folksong settings. Encouraged by alert and witty playing from Gerold Huber and his string colleagues, Gerhafer sings these – in virtually flawless English/Scottish – with a delightful and unforced sense of character. He vindicates a surprisingly slow tempo in a fervent, yearning 'Faithfu' Johnie', and suggests rollicking inebriation without coarsening his tone in 'Come fill, fill, my good fellow' – a performance duly relished by the Munich audience.

Best of all are the bittersweet, sometimes disturbing Britten arrangements that form the recital's centrepiece. In beauty of tone and sensitivity to text and mood, Gerhafer's vividly 'lived' performances are a match for any of his baritone predecessors, British or German. You barely need the booklet texts to follow the words – always something of a litmus test. Shorn of any hint of heartiness, 'The Miller of Dee', with its distorted echoes of the Schubertian mill stream, acquires a strange, brooding defiance. Gerhafer is at his most dulcet in 'Ca' the yowes' (with a haunting use of head voice) and the lulling nocturne 'O can ye sew' uses the 'blade' in his high baritone to fine dramatic effect in 'Avenging and bright' (properly 'fast and ferocious', as Britten asks), and brings a sly sense of comic timing to 'Sally in our alley'. Gerold Huber's playing is in the Britten class (in his recordings with Pears) for colour, point and wry inventiveness. Enough said. **Richard Wigmore**

'The Lion's Ear'

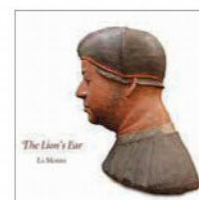
'A Tribute to Leo X, Musician among Popes'

Anonymous Fortuna disperata. Se mai, per maraviglia. Spem in alium (attrib Leo X) **Bruhier** Vivite felices **Canova da Milano** De mon triste desplaisir. Ricercars – after Richafort, Ness #4; Ness #10 **Cavazzoni** Lautre yor per un matin. O stella maris. Recercada **Craen** Ecce video celos apertos **attrib Domenico da Piacenza** [Rostibolli] Gioioso **Genet** Jerusalem, convertere **Isaac** Fortuna disperata/Sancte Petre. Quid retribuam tibi, Leo? **Josquin** Salve regina **Leo X** Canon di papa Lione x a 3 voci. Cela sans plus **Mantovano** Lirum bililurum

Mouton In omni tribulatione **Pesenti** Che farala, che dirala **Pisano** O vos omnes

La Morra

Ramée © RAM1403 (66' • DDD • T/t)



The enthusiasm of Leo X for music was often commented upon by

contemporaries. 'The Pope,' wrote the Venetian ambassador in 1517, 'is a very good-tempered and generous man, but above all else is an excellent musician.' This new recording from the Basel-based ensemble La Morra aims to illustrate the variety of musical practices, both sacred and secular, at Leo's court as well as presenting a handful of pieces that the Pope himself allegedly composed and performed. Much of this music will be unfamiliar; but the frequently shifting styles and forms (the majority of these works are less than three minutes in length), from the rhythmic bite of the opening *Lilum bililurum* to the plangent setting (conceivably Leo's) of *Spem in alium*, sensitively arranged in a sequence which alternates French, Italian and Latin settings with instrumental compositions and solo songs, never fails to keep the listener's attention alive.

So too do the occasional intrusions of hidden gems. Both Leo's chapelmaster, Elzéar Genet (better known as Carpentras) and a member of his choir, Bernardo Pisano, composed settings of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, presumably for performance in the Sistine Chapel during the three final days of Holy Week. Tantalising short extracts from both are given here in a *cappella* performances, beginning with Pisano's *O vos omnes*, with its striking invocatory opening, in a mellifluous and well-balanced account which successfully evokes an appropriately melancholic sound world, and then with Genet's *Jerusalem convertere*, which is treated to a convincingly more robust approach. Pride of place must be given to the final track, a setting of the *Salve regina* by Josquin Desprez. Possibly the work heard by Leo at a post-prandial performance in 1520, it is given here in a strongly characterised reading remarkable for the suppleness of its phrasing and keen understanding of the work's overall architecture. **Iain Fenlon**

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REISSUES

Rob Cowan welcomes a much-awaited Richter box and **James Jolly** introduces some recent box-sets

Sviatoslav Richter at 100

Yet another set devoted to the art of **Sviatoslav Richter**, and a fairly expensive one at that, selling for about £330. The value though is in the playing, which is as brilliant and as wholesomely direct as any you're ever likely to hear. Put very briefly, if you're an aficionado of great performances then reserve a chunk of your potential CD funds for the sake of a handsomely presented, fine-sounding Moscow collection (most of it in stereo) that has so many dazzling highlights that it's difficult to know where to start. So perhaps the best place is with material that has almost certainly never previously appeared on CD.

First, there are the repertoire duplications, all of them musically revealing. Two accounts of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, one from 1949, bounding in at top speed and fever pitch, and a (stereo) 1968 alternative, more centred, more subtle and relaxed than its predecessor, though still extremely brilliant while displaying a vast range of shades and colours, and, come 'The Great Gate of Kiev', conjuring a deep tolling that suggests the simultaneous involvement of every cathedral bell across the length and breadth of Russia. I've never heard a finer *Pictures* than this. The 1949 account is coupled with Schubert's D960 Sonata from the same recital, controlled in every bar but always deeply expressive. The 1968 *Pictures* is preceded by the varying hues of Schumann's *Bunte Blätter* – as personal a reading as Clara Haskil's – and imaginatively tailed by a rapturously beautiful reading of Debussy's 'Cloches à travers les feuilles' ('Bells through the leaves'), bells echoing bells.

Mozart's Piano Concerto No 18 under Kyrill Kondrashin appears in two concerts from 1977, just a day apart, the principal difference between them being the recorded balance, Richter sounding a first among equals for the initial version and very much up-front for the second. Both include 'encored' performances of the

finale. Two readings of Alban Berg's gnarled Chamber Concerto, under Rudolf Barshai and Yuri Nikolaevsky, find Richter taking a bold stance in sympathetic collaboration with the vibrant violinist Oleg Kagan. The later version (with Nikolaevsky, 1976) lashes out more freely and the finale is encored, albeit without the long repeat (which is included in the main performance).

I was extremely impressed by an impetuous Brahms Second Concerto under Kondrashin from 1967 (again with the finale encored), Richter sounding more at ease with the orchestra than he does on the version from a few years earlier under Mravinsky. And there's an extraordinary first release of a Brahms/Szymanowski recital from 1959: Brahms's Second Sonata where filigree and barnstorming go fist in hand, the whole of his Op 119 (with a weirdly indulgent interpretation of the tiny last Intermezzo) and an account of Szymanowski's Second Sonata that must henceforth be considered an unrivalled benchmark. Myaskovsky's Third Sonata receives similarly unbridled treatment elsewhere in the set. And as for Liszt's *Concerto pathétique* with Anton Ginsburg, imagine the stormiest rendition possible, then add some, and you'll have a rough idea of what to expect.

Returning to Mozart, there are supple, flexibly phrased readings of Concertos Nos 17 and 14 under Rudolf Barshai and Nos 27 and 22 under Kondrashin, the latter with Britten's (uncredited) cadenzas. Britten's Concerto is also included. And there's Beethoven's Triple Concerto with David Oistrakh and Rostropovich, and Dvořák's Piano Concerto, both enjoying firm leadership under Kondrashin and both more compelling than versions under Karajan and Carlos Kleiber respectively, principally because the participating soloists sound more comfortable in their own skins, Richter especially. Relatively restrained Bach concertos with Nikolaevsky



fall happily on the ear, as do duo sonatas with David Oistrakh and Oleg Kagan and, as expected, much Schubert, some of it recently issued on Melodiya's all-Schubert 'first release' four-CD collection (MELCD100 2231). But...sorry folks, you'll need to hang on to that too, because the Sonata No 9 in B major, D575, isn't included in the present collection, though an editing anomaly in D894 has been corrected. And there's the rest – sonatas and concertos by Beethoven, as well as works by Franck (Piano Trio and Quintet), Haydn, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Ravel (Trio and a stunning set of *Miroirs*), Chopin, Schumann, Shostakovich, Wagner, Prokofiev (Fifth Concerto and Sonatas Nos 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9), the first book of Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* (previously on Russian Revelation), songs with Nina Dorliak (some captured in rehearsal) and so on.

So, why Richter? With, say, Horowitz, summing up is relatively easy: take swatches of pianistic colour and write about them. The same goes for Michelangeli, Rubinstein, Friedman, Godowsky, Cortot and Rosenthal. But with Richter, it's different. In a sense, he isn't even there. He provides a siphon through which the music projects, often with delicacy or colossal power, but what emerges at our end doesn't bear his name, just the composer's. Such was his greatness; such was his genius.

Rob Cowan

THE RECORDING

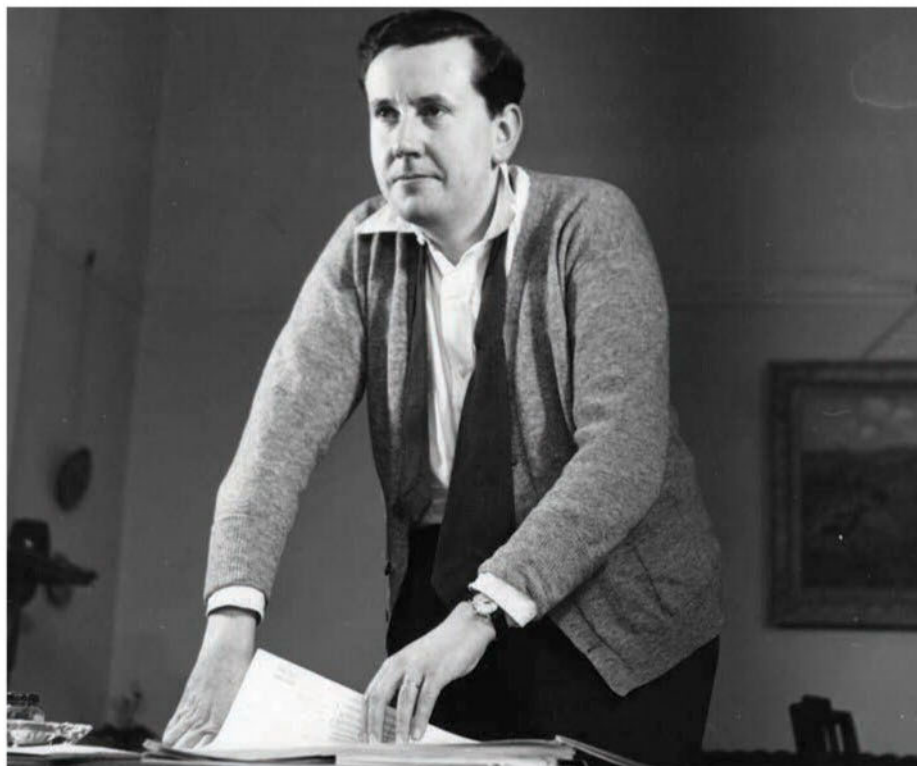
Richter: The 100th Anniversary Edition

Melodiya (50 discs) MELCD100 2270

Bargain boxes

Sony Classical has recently mined the Conifer catalogue to compile an impressive 11-CD **Malcolm Arnold** orchestral box-set (about £28). Much of the conductorial duty falls to Vernon Handley who is in charge of the RPO and RLPO in the symphonies and is, no surprise, a superb guide to these nine often very powerful works. He is generally tauter and more incisive than Richard Hickox in Nos 1-6 (Chandos) and the playing is better than on Andrew Penny's Naxos series. Handley also has the knack of seeming to alight on what sounds like just the correct tempo. (The Hickox/Rumon Gamba – who does Nos 7-9 – series, which prizes a very appealing expressiveness, incidentally reappeared last year as a fine single set which sells for about £18, the sound plusher in the Chandos house style and the playing by the LSO and the BBC PO very impressive.) If you don't know Arnold's symphonies, they're worth getting to know, and the journey, at least in the later works, is an intense one. Back in September 2006, Armando Iannucci wrote an essay in *Gramophone* on box-sets, Handley's Arnold being one of them, and concluded that 'I'm glad I now know this colourful, often eccentric, occasionally troubled music. Arnold's symphony cycle is nowhere near what I would have expected from hearing his lighter pieces such as the *Cornish Dances*. It's carefully wrought and, by the end, quite unremittingly painful music, but always dignified.' This Sony set also contains a host of other orchestral works – many of the concertos, most of the overtures (the BBC Concert Orchestra on top form) and the *Scottish*, *Cornish* and *English Dances* in their brass-band guises (excellently done, as you'd expect, by the Grimethorpe Colliery Band under the baton of Elgar Howarth). The concertos, often written with slightly smaller orchestras in mind, are entrusted to London Musici conducted by Mark Stephenson. Michael Collins is on terrific form in the two clarinet concertos, Richard Watkins mightily impressive in the horn concertos and Karen Jones a fine flute soloist. David Nettle and Richard Markham are characteristically virtuoso in the works for two pianists.

If this month's cover story about Erik Satie has whetted your appetite, do consider a superb set from Sony Classical called **Erik Satie and Friends**. It mines the CBS/Sony archive to gather together 13 albums of music – complete with original sleeve-design and minuscule



Sir Malcolm Arnold symphony series for Conifer, conducted by Vernon Handley, returns in an appealing 11-CD set

type – either by Satie or by artists who knew him or worked at the same time. There's Satie 'straight' courtesy of pianists William Masselos, Philippe Entremont and Daniel Varsano (the latter achieving that rare blend of the cool and the ironic, and playing with great precision in excellent sound), while Satie 'orchestrated' comes from Entremont (as conductor) with the RPO, the National PO and Charles Gerhardt, the LSO and André Previn, the Houston SO and Efreim Kurtz, and the Boston SO and Koussevitzky (from the late 1940s in decent sound for the period). There are a fair number of works repeated – we get *Parade* from both Koussevitzky and Entremont, and, not surprisingly, quite a number of *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*. To have Poulenc playing Satie, both solo and with Pierre Bernac in the songs (as well as songs by Poulenc) is priceless – their style and panache are utterly winning. As are Régine Crespin with Entremont at the piano in songs by Ravel and Satie: recorded quite close, it's a bit like hearing Crespin at full tilt from a front-row seat. She is very much the prima donna but the humour twinkles through. Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, and Robert and Gaby Casadesus, give us music for two pianos by, as well as Satie, Milhaud, Debussy, Poulenc, Chabrier and Fauré. John de Lancie – the oboist who, as a GI visiting Richard Strauss's home in Garmisch at the end of the war, sowed the seeds that flourished into the Oboe Concerto – joins the LSO

and Previn in works for oboe and orchestra by Françaix and Ibert alongside Debussy's orchestrations of two *Gymnopédies*. For any Satie-phile or Francophile this set is a must – £36 or thereabouts and it's yours: a lot cheaper than a bottle of Dom Pérignon and with comparable fizz!

André Previn's **Vaughan Williams** symphony series for RCA was a major milestone both in his career and in the history of this music on record. It returns in a six-CD set with the original couplings (*Concerto accademico*, Three Portraits from *The England of Elizabeth*, Tuba Concerto and *The Wasps* Overture). It's a slightly mixed bag – Nos 2, 3 and 5 are particularly fine, No 6 rather a disappointment – but overall worth hearing. There are no notes at all, simply the CDs in slipcases, but programme-notes and information are not hard to find online. The early 1970s Kingsway Hall acoustic still sounds well and the LSO play magnificently. It sells for about £16.

Of all the great conductors of the post-war period, it's strange that **Carlo Maria Giulini** never recorded a complete cycle of the Beethoven symphonies with a single orchestra. He did leave some very fine individual readings – for me, his DG Los Angeles Philharmonic *Eroica* is up there with the greatest – and his late La Scala PO series for Sony Classical remains the closest thing to a consistent approach (all it lacks is a *Choral*, a work Giulini did actually record quite a few times). It's a strangely

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inconsistent affair with some rather heavy and cumbersome performances: the coupling of Nos 1 and 7 is a bit earthbound, while Nos 4 and 5 make for a dramatic contrast (the Fourth was Giulini's first recording of the piece). Richard Osborne pointed to the slight lack of a cohesive approach, adding that 'if parts of the first movement seem a touch jumpy, the finale is a miracle of unforced motion, the La Scala playing relaxed, the mood gamesome as it invariably is when the conductor takes note of Beethoven's written instruction *Allegro ma non troppo*'. The Fifth is more of a piece, with moments of breathtaking beauty and glorious detail (as in the slow movement). The *Pastoral* is the highlight of the set – a joy from start to finish. The *Eroica*, though, has, by 1992, become an epic, and not in a good way. It feels endless: not a lot slower than the LA version, it lacks the tautness and sparseness that made that performance so gripping and powerful. Symphonies Nos 2 and 8, again, have plenty of ear-tickling moments, but nowadays we are used to – maybe crave – a greater fleetness of foot. A mixed bag, then.

One for viola fanciers next. RCA Red Seal has gathered its **Yuri Bashmet** discography and produced a nine-CD set which, given the instrument's wide and slightly bridesmaidish repertoire, is a rather odd programme, which adds to its charm. A few of the discs find Bashmet purely in the role of conductor with his Moscow Soloists – spick-and-span performances of things like the Tchaikovsky Serenade, the Grieg *Holberg Suite*, string works by Reger, Britten and Schnittke as well as string-quartet transcriptions by Mahler of Schubert (*Death and the Maiden*) and Beethoven (*Serioso*, Op 95). As soloist, there are the concertos and *concertante* works by Walton, Bruch, Hindemith and Schnittke. The Walton is particularly fine: Previn and the LSO are superb partners, and Bashmet brings authority and dexterity as well as his beautiful, rich viola tone. And that glorious sound adds something very special to a piece like Bruch's *Kol Nidrei*.

I particularly enjoyed the duo discs with the pianist Mikhail Muntian – the Brahms sonatas, the Schubert Arpeggione, the Schumann *Märchenbilder* and three Russian sonatas by Glinka, Roslavets and Shostakovich. Bashmet really makes the viola sing and the wonderfully sinuous way he unfolds each melody is a joy – the Glinka sonata is enchanting. He and Muntian are joined by the contralto Larissa Diadkova in Brahms's two songs with viola – if music has a colour this is the deepest of deep purples.



The art of viola player and conductor Yuri Bashmet is re-evaluated courtesy of RCA Red Seal

Sir Simon Rattle is a superb collaborative conductor, the sort of musician you'd want to have standing by your side in a concerto. Warner Classics has gathered together all the *concertante* recordings he made with the CBSO during his long tenure in Birmingham. To have the conductor as the common element to a concerto collection is unusual but it does emphasise what an extraordinarily eclectic musician Rattle is.

There's quite a focus on British music – the Arnold Guitar Concerto (with Julian Bream), the Britten Cello Symphony (Truls Mørk), the Elgar Cello (Mørk) and Violin (Nigel Kennedy) concertos, Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* (Kennedy) and the Walton Cello Concerto (Lynn Harrell). There's a freshness about Rattle's approach and the CBSO play with tremendous commitment. You can quibble about whether the Handley-conducted Elgar Violin Concerto has the edge; but nonetheless, this Rattle version is mighty fine. The Elgar and Britten performances from Truls Mørk are also well worth hearing – the Britten especially good, the Elgar lacking a little in spontaneity, as Andrew Achenbach commented back in December 1999.

By far the best-represented composer in this set is Bela Bartók, with no fewer than eight works included. Peter Donohoe is on magnificent form in the piano concertos and Kyung Wha Chung's recording of the Second Violin Concerto and the two Rhapsodies is really very special – it took our Concerto Award in 1994. Another *Gramophone* Award (1997) went to Thomas Zehetmair's recording of the two Szymanowski violin concertos, one of the first fruits of Rattle's exploration of the Polish composer's music. As Michael

Oliver commented (8/96) of the First Violin Concerto: 'Generous but finely controlled rubato from both soloist and conductor allows the concerto's improvisatory fantasy to flower; and the quiet close even has a touch of wit to it.'

Pianists are well represented: Lars Vogt gives us imaginative accounts of the first two Beethoven piano concertos (No 1 with Glenn Gould's cadenzas) and the Grieg and Schumann; Leif Ove Andsnes delivers a superb Brahms First Concerto ('Aided by that superb recording, it has about it a true sense of "occasion", with beauties, excitements and moments of torrential splendour that are distinctively and thrillingly its own' – RO, 12/89); and Cécile Ousset, then enjoying a renaissance, courtesy of EMI, gives us some very impressive and big-boned fare – Rachmaninov No 2, Liszt No 1, Saint-Saëns No 2 and the Ravels. It'll set you back about £30 – and bring variety, range and superb musicianship. **James Jolly**

THE RECORDINGS

Sir Malcolm Arnold: The Complete

Conifer Recordings Various artists
Sony Classical © 11 88875 18170-2

Erik Satie and Friends

Various artists
Sony Classical © 13 88875 17749-2

Vaughan Williams

Symphonies Nos 1-9 etc
LSO / André Previn

Sony Classical © 6 88875 12695-2

Beethoven

Symphonies Nos 1-8 etc
La Scala PO / Carlo Maria Giulini
Sony Classical © 5 88875 16800-2

Yuri Bashmet: The Complete

RCA Recordings

RCA Red Seal © 9 88875 16838-2

Simon Rattle & his Soloists: The CBSO Years

Warner Classics © 15 2564 64804-0

Opera



Hugo Shirley watches a starry *Forza del destino* from Munich:

'A large part of the characterisation comes from the quality of Harteros's singing, poised and perfectly shaped' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**



Mark Pullinger welcomes a debut disc from soprano Nicole Car:

'She possesses a lovely lyric soprano, full of dewy freshness, nowhere more so than in Mimi's aria' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**

Corigliano

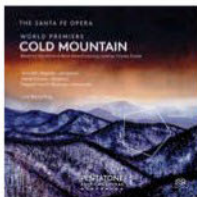
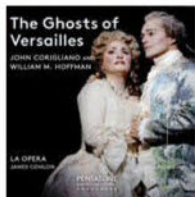
The Ghosts of Versailles

Victoria Livengood *mez* Woman with Hat
Kristinn Sigmundsson *bass* Louis XVI
Scott Scully *ten* Marquis
Christopher Maltman *bar* Beaumarchais
Patricia Racette *sop* Marie Antoinette
Lucas Meachem *bar* Figaro
Lucy Schauer *mez* Susanna
Joshua Guerrero *ten* Count Almaviva
Guanqun Yu *sop* Rosina
Renée Rapier *mez* Cherubino
Patti LuPone *sng* Samira
LA Opera / James Conlon
 Pentatone ② PTC5186 538
 (156' • DDD/DSD • S/T)
 Recorded live, February & March 2015

Higdon

Cold Mountain

Nathan Gunn *bar* WP Inman
Isabel Leonard *mez* Ada Monroe
Emily Fons *mez* Ruby Thewes
Jay Hunter Morris *ten* Teague
Roger Honeywell *ten* Solomon Veasey
Kevin Burdette *bass* A Blind Man/Stobrod Thewes
Anthony Michaels-Moore *bar* Monroe/Pangle
Deborah Nansteel *mez* Lucinda
Robert Pomakov *bass* Owens/Ethan
The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra / Miguel Harth-Bedoya
 Pentatone ② PTC5186 583
 (146' • DDD/DSD • S/T)
 Recorded live, August 2015



I was in the audience the night John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* had its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 1991, and I distinctly remember at least one lusty boo behind me. I turned to discover that it came from a prominent critic of the old school, which at that point in the history of American opera meant a writer who felt Corigliano's musically accessible and dramatically lively score was

a sell-out. Serious opera didn't sound like this; serious opera was descended from the spirit of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg, and latterly through the European ethos of composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Bernd Alois Zimmermann.

That view represented an ideological position more than an objective truth. American opera has always been stylistically variegated. When Corigliano's comedy was premiered in the early '90s, many celebrated it as a rebirth of American opera, perhaps because it was the first opera commissioned by the Met in a quarter of a century. Yet American opera composers hadn't been silent during the dormition of the country's operatic hegemon. Philip Glass had composed the seminal 'Portrait Trilogy' (*Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha* and *Akhnaten*) and Carlisle Floyd had written *Of Mice and Men* and *Willie Stark*, to cite only two composers with very different approaches to the form.

But *The Ghosts of Versailles* did play a role in changing the face of American opera, proving to impresarios that contemporary opera could be popular. So in a sense there is a connection between these two releases from Pentatone's American Operas series, both billed as 'world premiere recordings' even though the original Metropolitan Opera production of the Corigliano has been available on VHS tape and more recently DVD. Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*, recorded live during its premiere run at the Santa Fe opera last summer, belongs to the new generation of American opera which is, in many places, now faring better with audiences than standard repertoire. It also shares several key traits with other works in this new age of abundant American opera, many of which were salient in Corigliano's work: an emphasis on drama, a tendency to cinematic pacing, a flexible tonal palette incorporating a capacious stylistic versatility and a still awkward relationship to the voice and its natural habits.

Both of these works are by design more fun to watch than to listen to, especially Corigliano's mix of spectacle, schtick and pastiche. William M Hoffman's libretto –

an opera within an opera mixing up historical characters from the French Revolution with familiar faces from Beaumarchais's three comedies based on the Almaviva family – is a romp, and a rather silly one, and the music romps along with it, veering from sweet and sentimental to the standard set pieces of opera buffa, including patter songs, menacing monologues of evil, chirping lyrical effusions and a lot of music that falls somewhere between Mozart and Rossini. The LA Opera production, captured here in a performance from 2015, is well cast, with strong contributions from soprano Patricia Racette, who is a dramatically effective but not always dulcet-toned Marie Antoinette, Christopher Maltman as Beaumarchais, Lucas Meachem as Figaro and an effectively nasal and histrionic Patti LuPone in the small role of Samira.

But none of these admirable singers can quite compete with the star power that was assembled for the opera's 1991 run, which included Teresa Stratas, Marilyn Horne and Renée Fleming, with James Levine leading the orchestra. James Conlon is firmly in command of the LA Opera forces but even a sure and steady hand will never tame this musical farrago into something substantial.

Higdon's *Cold Mountain* is a sturdier, darker and more consistent work, based on the popular 1997 Civil War novel by Charles Frazier. The best-selling book has also been adapted as a film, and the Civil War has been a national obsession over the past five years of anniversary remembrance. So Higdon might have retailed a sentimental Americanism in the vein of Aaron Copland and pleased audiences through direct appeal to nostalgia and emotion. But the composer eschews almost all outside references and limits her own formidable command of folk idioms to a few scenes in which the fiddle plays an essential part in the drama. Instead, she writes music with a bracing, gun-metal grey flintiness, using her deft orchestration skills to evoke the novel's mix of violence and reverie.

One senses an intellectual decision, and perhaps a brilliant one, that has led to



A powerful sense of bleakness: Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* at Santa Fe Opera

complicated aesthetic results. Frazier's novel – and to a large extent Gene Scheer's libretto – depicts a world of emotional brokenness, of desolation and isolation. The characters learn and perhaps grow through the violence enacted on them; but musically, Higdon responds to violence not with a contrasting lyricism but with music of chamber-scale textures, often lone woodwinds etching rather desiccated lines as background to the truncated, lyrically circumscribed text-setting. Unlike other recent American operas, which hew to a more conventional sense that drama builds to lyrical release, Higdon's drama builds to powerful moments of thinness, verging on silence.

Again, it must be far easier to process this music when it is heard in the opera house than on recording. Even with careful attention to the libretto, the short scenes and their often rapid devolution into brutal denouements make for a trajectory that is exhausting but without catharsis until the final scenes of the second act.

Baritone Nathan Gunn and mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard are dramatically committed in the lead roles of Inman and Ada, though Gunn's voice can be dry and Leonard's upper range thins out especially in ensemble passages. The players of the Santa Fe Opera orchestra, under the direction of Miguel Harth-Bedoya, are often perilously

exposed but rarely falter. Unfortunately, abundant stage noise becomes a significant distraction. This is Higdon's first opera; and while it is polished and she has a flair for setting text clearly, it doesn't always capture the lyrical, lush and tonally peripatetic style that has made her music some of the most attractive and popular being produced today. But it does leave a powerful sense of bleakness and, better than many efforts to capture the essence of the Civil War over the past few years, it does so without a trace of sentimental cant. **Philip Kennicott**

Ginastera

'The Vocal Album'

Cinco Canciones populares argentinas, Op 10 (orch Shimon Cohen)^a. Don Rodrigo ^b – Duo d'amore (Act 2); Aria da chiesa; Romance; Finale (Act 3). Milena, Op 37^c

^aAna María Martínez, ^bVirginia Tola *sops*

^bPlácido Domingo *ten* 'Rafael Sardina *spkr*

Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra /

Gisèle Ben-Dor

Warner Classics © 2564 68683-0 (53) • DDD • T/t



Plácido Domingo sang the title-role in the US premiere of Alberto Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo*

with the New York City Opera in February 1966, inaugurating the company's new home at Lincoln Center. Domingo's career skyrocketed from there – although, sadly, neither Ginastera's opera nor the City Opera itself fared quite so well. Thus there is no complete recording of *Don Rodrigo*, the first of Ginastera's three operas (only *Bommarzo* was recorded in full and even that never made it to CD), so we must be especially grateful to Domingo for paying homage to his youthful triumph with these excerpts.

Pirated recordings of those 1966 City Opera performances are readily available, however, and comparing them with this new account, it's astonishing how fresh Domingo still sounds 50 years later. It's all the more impressive, considering that Ginastera's score is comparable to Berg's *Lulu* both stylistically and in its extreme technical demands. In fact, Domingo sounds far more expressive and fearless here, navigating the precipitous vocal lines with ease.

Reviewing the City Opera's landmark production, *New York Times* critic Harold C Schonberg praised Ginastera's 'compositional surety' but lamented the 'lack of anything touching the heart'. Yet, in this account, the passion is palpable and often profoundly moving. Domingo conveys Rodrigo's compulsive, destructive

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Raising eyebrows: Stefan Herheim's Bregenz reimagining of The Tales of Hoffmann

ardour with conviction and, more importantly, compassion. Virginia Tola is somewhat aloof as Florinda, the object of Rodrigo's obsession, but shows more of her emotional mettle in *Milena*, Ginastera's harrowing monodrama based on Kafka's love letters. Phyllis Curtin, who recorded this cantata in the '70s (Phoenix), offers greater richness and variety of tone; but Ginastera set the text in Spanish and, ultimately, Tola's fluency packs a stronger punch.

The programme opens with a setting of popular Argentine songs in colourfully effective yet respectful orchestral arrangements, and Ana María Martínez sings them with gusto and an appropriate feeling of bittersweet nostalgia. Gisèle Ben-Dor draws secure and characterful playing from the Santa Barbara Symphony throughout. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Offenbach



Les contes d'Hoffmann

Daniel Johansson *ten* Hoffmann
Kerstin Avemo *sop* Olympia/Giulietta
Mandy Fredrich *sop* Antonia/Giulietta
Rachel Frenkel *mez* Nicklausse/Muse
Michael Volle *bar*
 Lindorf/Coppélius/ Dr Miracle/Dapertutto
Bengt-Ola Morgny *ten* Spalanzani

Ketil Hugaas *bass* Crespel
Christophe Mortagne *ten* .. Andrés/Cochenille/Frantz
Prague Philharmonic Choir; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Johannes Debus
Stage director **Stefan Herheim**
Video director **Felix Breisach**
 C Major Entertainment © ② **DVD** 735508;
 © **Blu-ray** 735604 (174' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
 DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • O • s)
 Recorded live at the Festspielhaus, Bregenz,
 July 21 & 23, 2015



Stefan Herheim's production of Offenbach's *opéra fantastique* raised more than a few eyebrows when it opened in Bregenz last year, and now it has appeared on DVD one can understand why. It's carefully billed in the opening credits as an 'adaptation' by Herheim himself, conductor Johannes Debus and dramaturg Olaf A Schmitt, though it takes as its starting points a number of prominent features of the work itself: its emphasis on multiple personalities; an element of gender fluidity, which Offenbach confines to the figure of Nicklausse/La Muse; and the fact that despite ceaseless musicological efforts,

there is still no definitive score, leaving conductors and producers with an array of material from which to choose.

Herheim's protagonist is drag queen Stella, played by actor Pär (Pelle) Karlsson, whom we first encounter plunging drunkenly down a flight of stairs during the course of a Busby Berkeley style revue. What follows is a blurry phantasmagoria in which the boundaries of narrative and psychology are deliberately kept uncertain. Daniel Johansson's Hoffmann is possibly Stella's lover, possibly her male alter ego. Rachel Frenkel's Muse and Hoffmann's various loves wear copies of Stella's sequinned gown or her fetish-wear undies. Michael Volle, as the villains, is first seen shouting homophobic abuse from the stalls before invading the stage as some kind of spirit of negativity. But even he is eventually drawn into the staging's sexually ambivalent world, donning drag as Miracle in order to torment Mandy Fredrich's Antonia. Christophe Mortagne as the various servants, meanwhile, choreographs the resulting confusion dressed as Offenbach himself.

Not all of it works. The Antonia episode, in which Fredrich sings herself to death surrounded by tap dancers, doesn't chill the marrow as much as it can. Kerstin Avemo's



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Olympia is a sex doll that disturbingly develops a mind of its own. The Venetian scenes, so often problematic, come off best as a sinister game of desire and death. Herheim dispenses with Schlemil. Giulietta has become a decadent trinitarian Venus with Avemo, Fredrich and Frenkel shuttling the vocal line between them, while Mortagne-Offenbach plies a funeral gondola through the canals. It all looks glossy but could be more slick: if you're going to evoke Busby Berkeley, then the big numbers need to be more together than they are here.

The Kaye-Keck edition forms the base text, though there are cuts and reorderings. Importations from Guiraud allow Volle, mesmerising throughout, to sing 'Scintille diamant' with considerable grace. Johansson's big-voiced Hoffmann lacks a genuine *pianissimo* but phrases elegantly. Avemo sounds grainy when not *in alt*. Fredrich and Frenkel are nicely stylish. Debus can be very polished: playing and choral singing are both excellent. It doesn't have the unsettling quality of Christoph Marthaler's also flawed Madrid staging conducted by Sylvain Cambreling. John Schlesinger's Royal Opera production is still your best bet if you want something more traditional. **Tim Ashley**

Selected comparisons:

Prêtre (12/978, 12/03) (WARN) DVD 0630 19392-2
Cambreling (10/15) (BELA) DVD BAC124; Blu-ray BAC424

Sullivan

HMS Pinafore

John Mark Ainsley *ten* Sir Joseph Porter
Hilary Summers *contr* Little Buttercup
Elizabeth Watts *sop* Josephine
Andrew Foster-Williams *bass-bar* Captain Corcoran
Toby Spence *ten* Ralph Rackstraw
Neal Davies *bass-baritone* Dick Deadeye
Kitty Whately *mez* Hebe
Gavan Ring *bar* Bill Bobstay
Barnaby Rea *bass* Bob Becket
Tim Brooke-Taylor *spkr* Narrator

Scottish Opera Chorus and Orchestra /

Richard Egarr

Linn M ② CKD522 (85' • DDD • S/T)

Recorded live at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh,
 August 23, 2015



'We're about to weigh anchor with one of the best-loved comic operas ever,' announces

Tim Brooke-Taylor immediately after the overture of *HMS Pinafore*, and at precisely the moment we're supposed to be hearing Gilbert & Sullivan's rollicking opening chorus. This recording of a concert performance from the 2015 Edinburgh

Festival has many fine qualities, and there are any number of practical reasons why a recording wouldn't necessarily include Gilbert's spoken dialogue. Brooke-Taylor's narration is effective enough. But would you really want to hear it every time you listen to the disc?

This isn't a minor quibble: a recorded opera needs at least to approach a re-creation of the dramatic experience, and with its jokey references to Radio 3 and careless pre-empting of some of Gilbert's best punchlines, the narration repeatedly jolts you out of Gilbert & Sullivan's world. It's a major consideration for anyone who's after more than a souvenir of this specific performance. That's a shame, because it sounds like everyone involved was having a lot of fun.

Richard Egarr, for example: who knew that he was such an affectionate Savoyard? This isn't a performance to break speed records but it's light on its feet, and the Scottish Opera Orchestra respond with warmth and grace. It was clearly one of those occasions where everyone plays off each other, and with a cast like this, the results are never less than engaging – whether it's the chorus, sighing in response to Elizabeth Watts's breathless 'I love you' as Josephine in the Act 1 finale or the orchestra's delicious period-appropriate portamentos and Egarr's easy lilt as Hilary Summers's Buttercup lays out her wares. Summers is particularly adept at bringing out the darker side of Sullivan's mock-melodrama, while Watts gives Josephine's 'The hours creep apace' the full Donizetti treatment, to stellar effect.

The men are more variable: Dick Deadeye (Neal Davies) shouldn't really sound sexier than Ralph Rackstraw. I didn't think it was possible to say this in G&S, but Toby Spence, as Ralph, is simply too English – which takes some doing alongside the strangled RP and cheerfully hammy stylings of John Mark Ainsley's Sir Joseph Porter. Andrew Foster-Williams isn't the first Captain Corcoran to out-sing his First Lord and crew; his flexible bass-baritone is another one of the set's real pleasures.

A shipshape *Pinafore*, then, and aficionados will want to hear it. But that narration prevents it from being a library choice. True, neither Sargent nor Mackerras includes the dialogue either, but with Sargent you get vintage (if slightly creaky) Savoy style and a cracking *Trial by Jury* as a coupling. Mackerras delivers a performance of irresistible zip with a once-in-a-lifetime cast and fits it all on one disc. In company like that, Egarr's ship isn't scuppered, exactly – but it's certainly holed beneath the waterline. **Richard Bratby**

Selected comparisons:

Sargent (1/598) (EMI/WARN)

2564 61287-7 or 095087-2

Mackerras (1/95) (TELA) CD80374

Verdi

La forza del destino

Anja Harteros *sop* Leonora
Jonas Kaufmann *ten* Don Alvaro
Ludovic Tézier *bar* Don Carlo
Vitalij Kowaljow *bass* Padre Guardiano/Marquis of Calatrava
Nadia Krasteva *mez* Preziosilla
Renato Girolami *bar* Fra Melitone
Francesco Petrozzi *ten* Trabuco
Heike Grötzinger *mez* Curra

Chorus of the Bavarian State Opera; Bavarian State Orchestra / Asher Fisch

Stage director **Martin Kušej**

Video director **Thomas Grimm**

Sony Classical ② DVD 88875 16064-9;

③ 88875 16065-9 (178' • NTSC • 16:9 •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live 2014



Hot on the heels of Sony's *Cav & Pag* starring Jonas Kaufmann, here comes a another outstanding release

featuring the German tenor. This time, however, he's very much more part of a team. And it's something of a dream team, led by Anja Harteros and also featuring Ludovic Tézier – arguably the finest Verdi baritone active today – on marvellous form. Few will need reminding that these are the same three principals who featured on Warner Classics' recent studio *Aida*, but the *Forza* Leonora is probably a better fit for Harteros (and a role, obviously, which she has sung on stage), while Don Carlo certainly gives Tézier more to sink his teeth into than Amonasro. Perhaps Kaufmann's the one who suffers from the switch: he never sings less than intelligently, and produces some real excitement (particularly in his simmering exchanges with Tézier), but for me he's let down by a lack of true legato, not least in a disappointingly mannered account of the Alvaro's wonderful big aria, 'La vita è inferno all'infelice', in which he at times comes rather close to crooning.

Harteros, though, is mesmerising, exuding a sense of noble tragedy, and retaining her dignity in a production that, with nods to 9/11 and Abu Ghraib, communicates a powerful sense of the chaos caused by war and the resultant turmoil among peoples. A large part of the characterisation comes from the sheer quality of Harteros's singing, poised and



Anja Harteros and Jonas Kaufmann head the cast in a compelling new DVD of Verdi's *La forza del destino* from Munich

perfectly shaped, with an impeccable sense of style, the voice itself slightly hazy in colour but totally focused. This is a wonderful performance – sample her ‘Pace, pace, o Dio’, sung as she negotiates her way through a pile-up of large white crosses to the front of the stage, to get an idea.

Tézier is hardly less stylish, and sings with thrillingly rich and generous tone, and in elegant, aristocratic long phrases. Nadia Krasteva throws herself fully into Preziosilla; it's a role that can hardly be made to fit in with the very serious nature of Martin Kušej's production, so she is presented more or less straightforwardly as a good-time gal. Vitalij Kowaljow is a resonant Padre Guardiano (and earnest in the first scene as the Marchese), Renato Girolami a lively, if stretched, Fra Melitone. In the pit Asher Fisch turns in a relatively no-nonsense account of the score, but it's flexible and lively, and matched by top-quality playing from the orchestra, which is captured in excellent sound. The video production too is largely excellent, although the camera direction occasionally feels the need to point things out to us, and Harteros appears on the screen between scenes – no bad thing, perhaps, for a character who is absent from the stage for so much of the evening.

Kuşej's production might prove more of a sticking point for some. But it matches well the sprawling nature of the opera's action in offering a drama that swims with allusions but never really feels anchored, with those scenes featuring Leonora defined by a cool, chaste austerity. There are some arresting visual coups: the start of Act 3 in which Martin Zehetgruber's ingenious set presents an aerial view of a prison certainly counts as one; readers can make up their own minds as to whether Kaufmann's extravagant wig counts as another. Don't be put off, though: this is a compelling *Forza*, featuring some truly wonderful performances. **Hugo Shirley**

Wagner

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg

Ferdinand Frantz *bass-bar* Hans Sachs
Heinrich Pflanzl *bass* Sixtus Beckmesser
Bernd Aldenhoff *ten* Walther
Tiana Lemnitz *sop* Eva
Emilie Walter-Sacks *sop* Magdalene
Gerhard Unger *ten* David
Kurt Böhme *bass* Veit Pogner
Karl Paul *bar* Fritz Kothner
Johannes Kemter *ten* Kunz Vogelgesang
Kurt Legner *bass* Konrad Nachtigall
Karl-Heinz Thomann *bass* Balthasar Zorn
Heinrich Tessmer *ten* Ulrich Eisslinger
Gerhard Stolze *ten* Augustin Moser

Theo Adam *bass-bar* Hermann Ortel
Erich Händel *bass* Hans Schwarz
Werner Faulhaber *bass* Hans Foltz/Nightwatchman
Chorus of the Dresden State Opera;
Staatskapelle Dresden / Rudolf Kempe
 Profil ® ④ PH13006 (4h 21' • ADD • S)
 Broadcast performance 1951



As an LP (Vox or Urania), Kempe's early recording of Wagner's comedy was the first to

be internationally circulated. A complete *Meistersinger* out of virtually nowhere was something of an event, and that was how it was for Kempe in East Germany in 1951. He was still inexperienced as an actual practitioner of Wagner but his years of playing in orchestras in the pit and listening carefully to the work of an older generation (Beecham, Busch, Furtwängler) bore rich fruit.

His orchestral shaping of Wagner is generally lyrical and on the lighter side but there's no shortage of pomp or grandeur where required (try the Overture or the 'public' music of Act 3). An expert at pacing, Kempe maintains a tight dramatic line through the contrasting scenes of

Act 3, allowing the 'riot' after Beckmesser's serenading to appear a natural, musical climax to Act 2. He encompasses equally Sachs's most human moment of anger and sadness at 'losing' Eva to Walther as he does the timing and humour of the gulling of Beckmesser in Act 2.

In the cast, note the early appearance of later stars such as Gerhard Stolze and Theo Adam among the masters. The feel of a genuine played-in ensemble is strong. Although Ferdinand Frantz – along with Tiana Lemnitz – was a guest specially introduced for the recording, he feels and sounds, with accommodating support from the conductor, mostly comfortable fitting his serious bass Sachs into this context. Lemnitz is thoroughly professional and knows all the corners of Eva's role but does sound her age here. Bernd Aldenhoff is a lively, mostly supple Walther who pushes a little too hard in the actual Prize Song performance. Heinrich Pflanzl's Beckmesser is totally at one with Kempe (and the chorus) in never overdoing anything.

Despite its age, this remains a most loveable set (and is here heard at its best yet). Thanks to Kempe's natural conducting and the feel of the Dresden ensemble it feels like a live performance (and was probably recorded as quickly as one). In that respect it is even superior to the studio assembly of Kempe's later Berlin recording (EMI, 2/58, 2/93), even if it does not quite equal the special midsummer glow of Toscanini's or Thielemann's evocation of Act 2. **Mike Ashman**

Pumeza Matshikiza

'Arias'

Catalani La Wally – Ebben?...Ne andrò lontana
Dvořák Rusalka – Song to the Moon **Fauré** Après un rêve
Gluck Orfeo ed Euridice – Che fiero momento
Hahn A Chloris **Montsalvatge** Punto de habanera
Mozart Le nozze di Figaro – Giunse alfin il momento...Deh vieni, non tardar
Puccini La bohème – Sì, mi chiamano Mimi. Suor Angelica – Senza Mamma. Turandot – Tu che di gel sei cinta
Purcell Dido and Aeneas – When I am laid in earth
Ravel L'heure espagnole – Oh! la pitoyable aventure!
Sarti Le gelosie villane – Lungi dal caro bene
Tosti Sì tu le voulais
Yradier La paloma

Pumeza Matshikiza *sop*

Aarhus Symphony Orchestra / Tobias Ringborg
Decca © 478 8964 (53) • DDD • T/t



Proclaimed the 'Voice of Hope' in her debut album for Decca (A/14), the South

African soprano Pumeza Matshikiza carried more on her shoulders than just a message

of peace and progress from the Rainbow Nation. Alighting on a singer with a strong pedigree (trained at the Royal College of Music, Matshikiza was a Royal Opera young artist between 2007 and 2009 before becoming a company singer at Stuttgart Opera), the label also counted on her striking looks and personal story to sell a soprano who could be pitched to a mass market. Matshikiza was parachuted into Proms in the Park and the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony, and the 'Voice of Hope' album combined Mozart and Puccini with sunny arrangements of Xhosa, Swahili and Zulu songs.

'Arias', in both name and content, suggests neither Matshikiza nor her A&R men are sure of where to go next. Here, backed by unobtrusive support from the Aarhus SO under Tobias Ringborg, she delves into a bran tub of odds and sods lasting little over 50 minutes. There are operatic chestnuts (from Catalani, Mozart, Puccini and Dvořák). There are postcards from Spain (two habaneras, one Yradier's 'La paloma', the other from Montsalvatge's *Canciones negras*), and there are dips into *arie antiche*, whether rearranged (Sarti's 'Lungi dal caro bene') or completely imagined (Hahn's dependable pastiche 'A Chloris'). Some arias are clearly chosen because Matshikiza has performed the complete roles, but it's hard to create atmosphere from a sliver of *L'heure espagnole* ('Oh! la pitoyable aventure!'), and Dido's Lament – shorn even of 'Thy hand, Belinda' – is a jarring end-note. As Matshikiza traverses this emotional battlefield, she lands glancing blows but no knockout punch. True, you would have to be a wally not to be moved by her Wally, whose 'Ebben?...Ne andrò lontana' is delivered with simplicity and sincerity (listen to the wistful frailty of 'O della madre mia casa gioconda'). Here her natural ardour, the coppery sheen to her voice and its slightly covered top notes all come off well.

Yet, particularly because there seems no special affinity between Matshikiza and much of this material, you want more. Sometimes that really does mean *more* – more character in the delivery and more body from the voice, particularly in a big sing such as Rusalka's 'Song to the Moon' or in the Baroque (or quasi-Baroque) numbers where Matshikiza pecks at the line, not quite singing the phrases through. Yet there are also technical glitches: dubious intonation and, in Puccini's 'Senza Mamma', a wiry, wobbly top A that unfortunately rounds the aria off. Sadly, it's enough, all in all, to be having some doubts about the voice of hope. **Neil Fisher**

'The Kiss'

Bizet Carmen – Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante
Cilea Adriana Lecouvreur – Act 2, Intermezzo; Io son l'umile ancella
Dvořák Rusalka – Song to the Moon
Gounod Faust – Ah, je ris (Jewel Song)
Massenet Thaïs – Dis-moi que je suis belle
Puccini La bohème – Mi chiamano Mimi
Rimsky-Korsakov Servilia – My flowers!
Smetana The Kiss – Overture; Vendulka's Lullaby
Tchaikovsky Eugene Onegin – Introduction; Tatyana's Letter Scene
Verdi Il trovatore – Tacea la notte placida. Simon Boccanegra – Come in quest'ora bruna
Nicole Car *sop* **Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra / Andrea Molino**
ABC Classics © ABC481 2371 (74) • DDD • T/t



This is a timely release from ABC Classics. The Australian soprano Nicole Car

made her Royal Opera debut last autumn, as a touching Micaëla before starring as Tatyana. Both roles feature on this cannily programmed disc – a mixture of well-loved classics and a few specialities. Essentially a calling card, it demonstrates Car's ability in rarer Russian and Czech repertoire, the extract from Smetana's *The Kiss* lending the disc its title.

She begins the disc boldly, with Marguerite's Jewel Song – just the sort of repertoire one associates with her compatriot Dame Joan Sutherland, but Car's is a lighter instrument. She possesses a lovely lyric soprano, not a glamorous sound, but full of dewy freshness, nowhere more so than in Mimi's aria, where the voice has a rosy bloom. Her Mimi is very much the 'girl next door' and she ends with a charming final line. Micaëla has a similar innocence. Her Thaïs shows promise, although the raw final note on the optional high D on 'éternellement' should have been retaken.

While the role of Leonora in *Il trovatore* would seem on the heavy side for Car at present, she is aided in 'Tacea la notte placida' by conductor Andrea Molino, who takes the aria quite swiftly. The cabaletta sparkles. Car discovers darker colours in Amelia's 'Come in quest'ora bruna' from *Simon Boccanegra*, although it's a bit of a trudge, the seabirds wheeling rather deliberately along Genoa's coastline.

Tatyana's Letter Scene is packed with emotion and meaning in something approaching a signature role. Among the rarities, Rimsky-Korsakov's Servilia is a delight, although it's a shame the aria from Tchaikovsky's *The Oprichnik* is relegated to the download version of the album only.

Mark Pullinger

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Concert revelations captured on tape

Violinist Endre Wolf and conductor Michael Gielen are celebrated in two new box-sets

The accomplished Hungarian-born violinist Endre Wolf, son of a seamstress and a watchmaker, pupil of Hubay as well as a distinguished pedagogue, died in 2011 aged 97, having spent the war years leading the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in neutral Sweden and much of the post-war period in the UK as Professor at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Danacord has already issued a two-disc set of Wolf's commercial Tono recordings 1949-51 (DACOCD714/15) but the sequel 'Endre Wolf in Sweden', a six-disc collection of studio and private recordings, is a good deal more interesting. Sadly one of the most fascinating documents is also by far the worst recorded, so much so that at its outset a 1944 Sibelius Concerto under Sixten Eckerberg sounds like an electronic re-composition. Things do improve, and Wolf, obviously under the influence of Heifetz, fairly whizzes through the piece, muddling here and there though he emerges as triumphant in the end. The Concerto is preceded by *The Oceanides* where Wolf leads the orchestra.

The Heifetz parallel extends to two recordings with the cellist Erling Blöndal Bengtsson: Kodály's Duo where the finale's folk-like central section is just a little rushed and Brahms's Double which in terms of its overall approach and tonal profile is very much like the Heifetz-Piatigorsky-Wallenstein recording on Sony/RCA. Bartók's Solo Sonata is drawn with very broad brush strokes while duo sonatas with pianist Hans Leygraf – Mozart's K378, Beethoven's Op 96, Brahms's Op 100 and Bartók's Second (as well as Webern's Op 7 pieces and Franck's D minor Sonata with Eckerberg at the piano) – are musically compelling.

Concertos on offer include a strongly voiced Beethoven (conducted by Sergiu Comissiona) and a valuable programme

of three Swedish violin concertos, by Erland von Koch, Sven-Erik Bäck and Hilding Rosenberg, the last two being the most impressive musically. Wolf's Bach (Partitas Nos 1 and 3, Concertos Nos 1 and 2) is generally measured and meaningful, the A minor Concerto taken down from the same March 1961 concert as the Bäck, the conductor for the occasion, Michael Gielen.

Gielen, who announced his retirement in 2014, is the subject of a new 'Edition' on SWR Music, much of the First Volume (with the SWR Symphony Orchestra Baden-Baden and Freiburg, the Saabrücken Radio Symphony and the Stuttgart Radio Symphony) being released for the very first time. Haydn and Mozart come off especially well, Gielen making the most of the varied moods and colours inherent in the eight-movement *Thamos, King of Egypt* which emerges as an absorbing masterpiece – or at least that's how you feel for its 41-minute duration. And Gielen's method? Similar to such cerebral rostrum forebears as Hans Rosbaud, Ernest Bour and Ernest Ansermet – their mantra, as his, 'less is more', quietly prioritising what means most musically, balancing their forces with sensitivity, keeping a keen ear out for salient detail and insisting at all costs on clarity and transparency.

Gielen once said to me that he thinks of himself as the opposite of the record industry, 'which is perhaps why the industry has never taken me on' (and why this isn't the industry's first shot at a Gielen Edition). He also said that to compose is the only way to make music, and his inner muse brings wisdom to Mozart (Symphonies Nos 30 and 36), Haydn (Nos 95, 99 and 104) and Beethoven (the *Coriolan* and three *Leonore* Overtures, and the Triple Concerto with Edith Peinemann, Antonio Janigro and Jörg Demus). Gielen is at pains to make the

Leonores sound unlike while the Triple suggests gravitas on an intimate scale and the Haydn and Mozart symphonies claim such virtues as energy, elegance and a consistently expressive line.

When Gielen brought his orchestra to London in 1996 he offered an imposing but pleasingly verdant performance of Schubert's *Great C* major (a performance subsequently issued on CD) and Schubert provides the highlight of this present collection, the *Death and the Maiden* Quartet transcribed for string orchestra by Mahler and 'realized and arranged by Michael Gielen'. Quite aside from the sheer depth and weight of the sound (cellos and basses in overdrive), there's the constant shifting between solo and full strings and the exciting antiphonal interplay between first and second violins. Gielen makes a similar impact elsewhere with his version of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, his implied point: if you're going to make chamber music symphonic, make it sound symphonic. Also included are fine performances of Schubert's A flat Mass D678, *Offertorium* D963 and Brian Newbould's arrangement of the D major second movement *Andante* from the Tenth Symphony, wonderful music that engages both the head and the heart. If subsequent volumes of the Gielen Edition are as good as this then we have good reason to be impatient for them. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Endre Wolf in Sweden
Studio and private recordings
1944-78

Danacord **B** **6** DACOCD763/8



Michael Gielen Edition, Vol 1
1967-2010

SWR Music **M** **6** SWR19007CD



The recordings that Endre Wolf made from 1944 to 1978 are explored in a new six-disc box-set from Danacord

Collected Gendron

Among the contents of Warner Classics' mammoth 80-disc 'The Menuhin Century' (4/16) is a series of recordings by a musically persuasive piano trio made up of Yehudi and his pianist sister Hephzibah, and that most subtly expressive of cellists Maurice Gendron. Happily for those who have neither the funds nor the space for the larger set, French Decca have come up with a relatively slim, 14-disc collection devoted to 'The Art of Maurice Gendron' which includes those very recordings, namely the two Beethoven Op 70 trios (No 2 being especially memorable), the two Schubert trios (plus the Sonata movement D28 and the wonderful Notturmo D897), Brahms's Op 87, and the Tchaikovsky Trio. Also from the Warners stable we're given the two Brahms string sextets, where Gendron partners Menuhin and, among others, the cellist Derek Simpson. Having the 'major' recording companies co-operate in this way is relatively rare, a conscientious move towards comprehensiveness, the remainder of the set originating with labels from Universal's own stable. Gendron's set of the Bach Cello Suites is one of the best stereo options: warm, vibrantly communicative, rhythmically firm yet always personal and personable. Two Dvořák Concerto recordings (with Karl Rankl and Bernard Haitink) similarly alternate the impassioned youth and the more reposeful older man, as do versions of the Schumann Concerto under Ansermet (1953) and Christoph von Dohnányi (1962). Gendron was to the cello what Arthur Grumiaux was to the violin, a master of potent understatement. Unmissable.

THE RECORDING



L'Art de Maurice Gendron
Decca/Discovery ⓑ ⑭
4823 849

Seductive Shafran

It would be difficult to cite a stronger contrast with Gendron's urbanity than the luscious over-statements of Daniil Shafran, a charismatic musician whose big full-bodied tone – even Rostropovich sounds slim-line by comparison – tends to divide opinion. Melodiya has released an excellent transfer of Shafran's 1971 set of Beethoven's sonatas which, like the Rostropovich/Richter recording from the previous decade (Philips/Mercury), doesn't include the sets of variations. Shafran's excellent pianist is Anton Ginsburg, though being up against Richter does mere 'excellence' absolutely no favours, especially in music like the racetrack rondo finale to Op 5 No 2 where Shafran's account suggests top-of-the-league virtuosity until you switch to the older recording and sample what real athletics is all about. As for Op 69, Rostropovich's relative restraint rules, especially at the outset where Shafran's tonal bear hug, comforting though it is, occasionally proves just too much of a good thing. Similarly, the *Adagio cantabile* start of the finale finds Rostropovich at his most affectingly personal. None of this is intended to detract from Shafran, a wonderful cellist, distinctive in all respects, his intense vibrato sometimes greeting the note only gradually, sometimes

suspended altogether. He's possibly the most sensuous cellist ever to have made recordings and his playing has a seductive 'come hither' quality that is quite unlike anyone else's. If you're a cello fancier, hearing him is mandatory.

THE RECORDING

Beethoven Cello Sonatas
Nos 1-5 Daniil Shafran vc
Anton Ginsburg pf
Melodiya Ⓜ ②
MELCD100 2296

Sofronitsky fans the flames

The legend of another charismatic Russian, the pianist Vladimir Sofronitsky, who was praised to the skies by Glazunov and married Scriabin's daughter, took time to bed down beyond his native Russia, but once established gave rise to a veritable cult. Numerous Sofronitsky LPs and CDs have come and gone but a new Melodiya five-disc set devoted to concert recordings is about as representative as any devoted to this pianist that I've so far encountered.

Much of the actual playing is phenomenal. Schumann responds especially well to Sofronitsky's brand of impulsive attack and otherworldly musing, both *Carnaval* and the *Symphonic Studies* full of surprises and original touches, the stormy Romance Op 28 No 1 straining the limits of passion to the point of exhaustion. The F minor Fantasy adds sweep to Sofronitsky's roster of virtues and in the finale I was unexpectedly reminded of Schubert's G flat Impromptu, also included, and which he performs with considerable rhythmic freedom.

As for Scriabin, 'to the manner born' would be an understatement and listening to his performances of Sonatas Nos 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 plus sundry short pieces (ending with a fabulous rendition of the tumultuous Study Op 8 No 12) makes you realise the wisdom of his claim that playing too much Scriabin will drive you mad. Most recordings are passable from a technical point of view, excepting perhaps a madcap account of Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata which sounds as if it was recorded on a neglected pub upright. Quite wonderful all the same. Ⓜ

THE RECORDING



Vladimir Sofronitsky: Concert Recordings
Melodiya Ⓜ ⑤ + DVD
MELCD100 2312

Books



Patrick Rucker on a study of 19th-century American musical politics:

'Shadle is the composers' enthusiastic advocate and it is that enthusiasm which enlivens his narrative'



Jeremy Nicholas reads a volume of Richter family reminiscences:

'Richter was famously reclusive and unwilling to talk or write about himself, and little is known of his early life'

Orchestrating the Nation

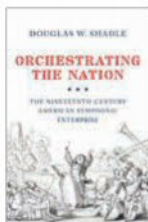
The Nineteenth-Century

American Symphonic Enterprise

By Douglas W Shadle

Oxford University Press, HB, 330 pp, £35.99

ISBN 978-0-19-935864-9



Edgar Allen Poe never really knew success. He was celebrated by the French, but the American literary

establishment regarded him as an outlier for almost 150 years. His status as one of the three great American poets of the 19th century, alongside Whitman and Dickinson, is a very recent phenomenon. Poe's nemesis, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, enjoyed prestige and wealth unparalleled among his literary contemporaries. Today, however, he is more esteemed as a pioneer of comparative literature studies than as a poet. Herman Melville, whose masterpiece *Moby Dick* appeared in 1851, lived out the remaining 40 years of his life in relative obscurity. Recognition of his achievements as a novelist began only in the 1920s. Whatever the ups and downs attached to the reputations of these literary figures, their names remain at least familiar.

Douglas W Shadle's new book, *Orchestrating the Nation: The Nineteenth-Century American Symphonic Enterprise*, suggests that their composer contemporaries, particularly the symphonists among them, have been essentially relegated to oblivion. Shadle identifies some 55 native or resident composers who, between them, produced about 100 symphonies in the 19th century. He then focuses on a smaller group – Anthony Philip Heinrich, George Frederick Bristow, William Henry Fry, Robert Stoepel, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, John Knowles Paine, Ellsworth Phelps, George Whitefield Chadwick, Amy Beach, and George Templeton Strong (son of the diarist) – whose varied careers reflect the

challenges faced by American composers in a largely eurocentric critical and institutional milieu.

As Shadle sums up in his epilogue, 'None of this music survived as part of the standard performance repertoire after the turn of the century because its most powerful potential cultivators – critics and conductors – had maintained inhospitable attitudes toward it before it had a chance to thrive.' Although he claims not to be concerned with the inherent value of individual symphonies, Shadle is the composers' enthusiastic advocate and it is that enthusiasm which enlivens his narrative. As for the inhospitable critics and conductors, two stand out as arch-villains. John Sullivan Dwight, editor of *Dwight's Journal of Music* in Boston between 1852 and 1881, looms large as representative of the often condescending and occasionally vicious music criticism that characterised American journalism of the day. And it is Theodore Thomas, the conductor usually credited with establishing the symphony orchestra as a fixture in American cultural life, who, in Shadle's view, time after time misses the opportunity to support local talent.

All this played out, in Shadle's narrative, against a decidedly pro-German orientation in American musical life that tended either to ignore native talent or to give it short shrift. An influx of German musicians in the wake of the 1848-49 revolutions swelled the already large German-American population, and their influence on American music proved decisive. Moreover, for young native-born musicians studying abroad, Germany was the destination of choice. That said, many musical institutions in America – and not only orchestras – would not have taken root and developed as soon as they did deprived of this foreign influence. At times it almost seems Shadle would like to blow out the lamp in order to curse the darkness.

But *Orchestrating the Nation* contains much valuable new research. A broad spectrum of critical commentary, well beyond the reactionary Dwight, is presented, bringing into focus the

competing agendas that emerged in the search for a national voice in music. The confusing implications of Dvořák's American sojourn (1892-95) are clarified and given context. Heretofore neglected figures, such as Ellsworth Phelps, are profitably brought forward. And whatever the shortcomings of 19th-century composers in creating something recognizable and universally acceptable as an American sound, Shadle amply demonstrates that it wasn't for lack of trying.

One must take issue, however, when Shadle implies that today things haven't really changed so much from the bad old Germanophilic 19th century. Two relatively recent examples will suffice. Surely the impact of individuals and organisations such as the late John Duffie and Meet the Composer, now New Music USA, since the mid-1970s has been felt by musicians all across America. And most major American orchestras now maintain composer-in-residence programmes, yielding startlingly creative results.

During my lifetime, there has never been a greater variety of new American music to choose from, nor larger, more enthusiastic audiences eager to hear it. Nor have there been – dare I say it? – so many critics who respond warmly, supportively and discerningly to new work. **Patrick Rucker**

Svetik

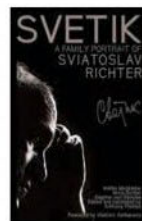
A Family Memoir of Sviatoslav Richter

By Walter Moskalew, Anna Moskalewa-Richter and Dagmar von Reincke

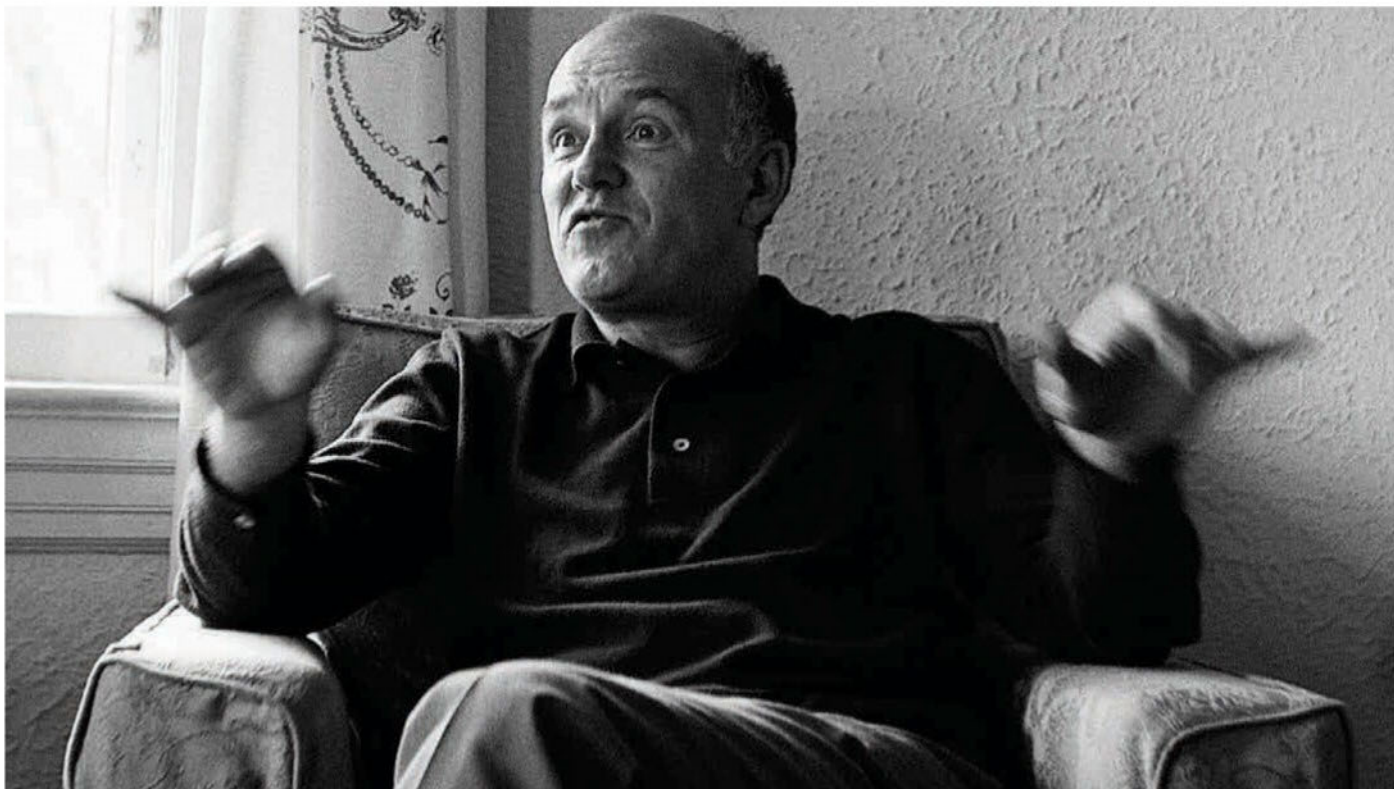
Edited and translated by Anthony Phillips

Toccata Press, HB, 462pp. £18.00.

ISBN 978-0-907689-93-5



Svetik ('Little Light') was how Sviatoslav Richter was known within his large family circle. For many people, he was the greatest pianist of his generation. Nearly 20 years after his death in 1997, he continues to fascinate. Barely a month goes



Sviatoslav Richter: the great pianist is remembered by his family in a new book from Toccata Press

by without the release of another Richter recital (80 per cent of his recorded legacy extending from 1947 to 1994 comes from live performances). For others, he presents a puzzling figure, especially towards the end of his life, with his often wayward tempi, the darkened halls with an Anglepoise lamp illuminating the score, and the curmudgeonly stage presence.

In whatever light you see him, though, Richter was an extraordinary and unique artist. What shaped him? He was famously reclusive and unwilling to talk or write about himself, and little is known of his early life, the first 22 years of which he spent in the relative obscurity of Ukraine. This book gives some – but only some – of the answers.

The bulk of it is by Walter Moskalew, Richter's much younger first cousin (b1937) who was evacuated to Germany in 1943 and emigrated to the United States in 1952. A Harvard-educated classicist, he has published studies of Plautus and Virgil. Moskalew ('Alik' to his intimates) is the guardian of his family's extensive archives and, although having only vague memories of Svetik before the war, spent much time with him on the pianist's three tours of the United States in 1960, 1965 and 1970. The second part of the book is 'My Life – The Memoirs of Anna Moskalewa-Richter' (Richter's mother). Part 3 is 'Sviatoslav Richter as a Young Boy' by Svetik's beloved aunt Tamara Moskalewa (aka Meri, aka Dagmar von Reincke), younger sister of

Anna, godmother to Walter Moskalew and, as the book's illustrations reveal, a highly talented artist.

Moskalew's opening chapters introduce a head-spinning cast of family members that rivals *War and Peace*. Many have similar names or the same as their grandparent or are known by a nickname. A 20-page glossary (and family tree) is useful. They tell us of two particular events in the lives of this cultured, creative family during the war that left their mark on Svetik: his mother took off with her lover in June 1941, abandoning him and his father, Theo, who was then accused by the Bolsheviks of being a German spy, arrested and executed four months later. Suddenly, those readings of the Prokofiev sonatas take on extra significance.

It is only when we reach Moskalew's account of his cousin's American tours that we finally get to see Richter the man and the pianist (accompanied, not incidentally, by some terrific photos). His account of the Boston debut, the night Svetik was reunited with his mother, the progress of the tours and the dynamics of the family relationships are as valuable as his observations of Richter as he practices the *Diabelli* Variations and works on Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata prior to his Carnegie Hall recital in 1970. It was during the first tour in 1960 that Anthony Phillips also met Richter. His friendships with the pianist and Moskalew date from this period and the book, very much a joint enterprise, benefits from it.

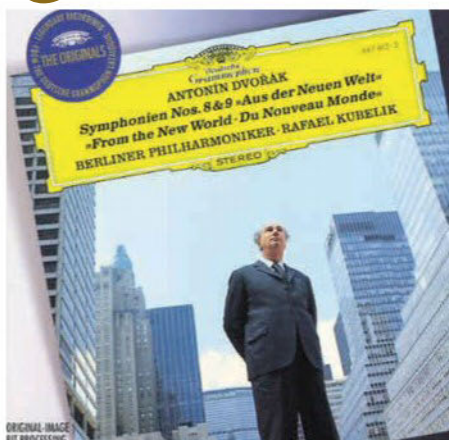
The two clearly took the decision that Richter's private life was to remain just that. Even Nina Dorliak, his constant companion for 50 years, receives only a footnote: 'It was generally believed that they were husband and wife. In fact they never married.' It hardly constitutes a character portrait. Richter's homosexuality (an issue then, perhaps, but surely not now) is not mentioned.

Equally (and arguably more) revealing are the chapters drawing on the intense and voluminous correspondence between Svetik and Meri, the aunt who became such an important figure in his life after the death of his mother in 1963, addressing each other as 'Reginald' and 'Dora'. Almost a third of the book consists of Anna Richter's memoirs. Though not all of it is concerned directly with Svetik, it offers a vivid portrait of family life in pre-revolutionary Russia. I can think of no higher praise for Phillips's translation than to say one would never guess it was a translation. This is followed by Aunt Meri's portrait of her nephew's childhood written in 1963, the second part of which is entitled 'A Quite Different Sort of Boy'. Exactly so.

To ensure crisp reproduction of the large number of illustrations (nearly 300), the book is printed on high-quality paper, and the entire volume is quite beautifully produced in the way we have come to expect from Toccata Press.

Jeremy Nicholas

Classics RECONSIDERED



Rob Cowan and Andrew Achenbach revisit and reassess the 1972 recording of Dvořák's New World Symphony by the Berlin Philharmonic under Kubelík on DG



Dvořák

Symphony No 9 in B minor, 'From the New World'
Berlin PO / Rafael Kubelík

DG ® 447 4122 (originally released on 2720 066; this review is of 2530 415)

This new account does seem to me quite magnificent and its claims on the allegiance of collectors are strong. Impressions are inevitably highly subjective and doubtless coloured by the state of one's metabolism, but I have enjoyed this account more than almost any other I have heard during the past decade. It has the kind of freshness and vigour that remind one of what it was like

to hear this piece for the very first time. The atmosphere is authentic and the sense of nature seems uncommonly acute. Kubelík has captured the enthusiasm of his players and generates a sense of excitement and poetry. The playing of the Berlin Philharmonic is marvellously eloquent. The woodwind phrase with great poetic feeling and imagination; come to that, all the orchestra responds with sensitivity and virtuosity. The recording has great dynamic range and encompasses the most featherweight string *pianissimo* to the fullest orchestral *tutti* without discomfort except

at the very end of Side 2 where there is a trace of discoloration. The listener is placed well back in the hall so that the woodwind, though they blend beautifully, may seem a little too recessed for some tastes, though I should add that in climaxes there is no lack of vividness, power or impact. The balance and timbre of each instrument is natural and truthful: nothing is made larger than life. Kubelík has a natural warmth and flexibility though he does indulge in one affectation which I do not like in the finale where the clarinet theme sounds very mannered. **Robert Leighton** (9/74)

Rob Cowan Rafael Kubelík's *New World* has cropped up in recordings from Chicago, Vienna, Munich, Berlin and Prague. None in my view has quite caught the essence of what is plainly a noble and exhilarating interpretation. The Berlin Ninth is at the very least handsome, Karajan's gold-topped orchestra serving Kubelík with a wide roster of dynamics, incorporating typically sensuous string playing (expressive *portamentos* reflecting the manners, if not quite the spirit, of the 'old world'), tonally radiant brass and a honeyed array of woodwinds. But do the polished parts add up to a compelling whole? For me what's lacking is that clinching outdoorsy perspective – fresh, easy, loose-limbed and naturally flexible, the sort of dancing spontaneity you sense almost immediately in the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's *Carnival Overture* (on the same CD as the Ninth in my Kubelík 'Symphony Edition' set). Compare the overture with the symphony's *Scherzo* and the point forcibly hits home.

Andrew Achenbach Surprisingly (and I write as a diehard fan of both the composer and

the conductor), it's been a good few years since I've sought out this famous *New World*. It is as formidably polished, affectionately shaped and cogently structured as I had remembered. (I do miss Dvořák's marked exposition repeat in the first movement, though – so much happens in such a short period of time!) *Tutti* flare up excitingly in DG's vintage Jesus-Christus-Kirche production from June 1972 (which is still a little bass-shy), and the Berliners are at their magnificently opulent, unruffled best; indeed, the seductive sheen of the playing often takes the breath away. Like you, however, I also harbour nagging doubts. I do find myself craving rather more in the way of earthy tang and innocent wonder. Instead, we get Dvořák in his dapper Sunday best, a cosmopolitan figure striding confidently down Berlin's Unter den Linden boulevard. Certainly, I'd have welcomed a little more of that 'dancing spontaneity' you mention. It's there in spades on nearly all of Kubelík's Munich recordings, and his live *New World* from June 1980 on Orfeo in particular – a very special, life-enhancing document if ever I heard one.

RC You use the phrase 'formidably polished' and indeed I think that's half the problem. The surface might be polished but what lies beneath definitely isn't. Beam up 2'28" into the *Scherzo* and listen out for the internal woodwind parts. They're hardly audible, whereas on Karajan's 1960s DG recording with the same orchestra the same passage has far greater clarity. I'm reminded of John Culshaw who, when recording Kubelík with the Vienna Philharmonic (sessions that included the *New World*), complained that the sound in the control room was diffuse. On checking what he could hear in the hall he found that the effect was the same: Kubelík evidently wasn't holding the orchestra together. Indeed, when I covered the *New World* for a *Gramophone* Collection (9/99), although I noted 'ample elbow room' in the Berlin first movement, I thought the *Scherzo* 'unexpectedly ill-focused'. In the end, I found myself reaching for Kubelík's Chicago Symphony Orchestra recording on Mercury, where the *Scherzo* in particular is tightly sprung. That same passage (at 2'14") is vastly superior in Chicago. But yes, that 1980 Munich performance is also extremely fine.



Rafael Kubelík: he and his Berliners are 'formidably polished' in the 1972 recording of 'From the New World'

AA I'd also cite that stormy passage towards the end of the *Scherzo* (from 7'01"), where you do get the impression that Kubelík is momentarily struggling to keep things tight – it's almost as if the church acoustic is battling against the orchestra. Also, if I'm being incredibly picky, I do think the slow movement is perhaps just a touch reverential and the trio a little bland. In the latter, listen to, say, Ančerl, Iván Fischer or Harnoncourt: you can almost feel the grass between your toes and hear the doves cooing! For me, the acid test in any performance of the *New World* comes towards the end when Dvořák masterfully marshals the return of material from earlier in the symphony, above all, that clinching statement of the slow movement's inspired introduction. In my experience, no one nails these thrillingly defiant bars quite like Ančerl, though Kubelík gets pretty close. Oh yes, and just a few seconds earlier (at 9'33", to be precise), I love the extra emphasis he gives to the trumpets' stentorian dotted quaver and semiquaver interjection – strictly speaking, of course, it's not in the score; but my, how it works!

RC I agree about the excessively reverential aspect of the *Largo* – the Berlin Philharmonic in 'Adagio Compilation' mode (Kubelík would no doubt have ticked me off for saying that). Another very interesting issue concerns the end of the finale, at the point where the strings cry the principal theme *Meno mosso e maestoso* (10'50"), and a transformed version of the symphony's *Allegro molto* motto rushes back at *Allegro con fuoco, fff* (11'08") – at least, that's what is printed in the score and how Sawallisch (in Philadelphia), Sir Colin Davis and Mengelberg (both with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, the latter especially electrifying) read it. It was Leon Botstein who alerted me to this little-known peculiarity, and for his London performance that was how he played the passage. Once heard, never forgotten. I'm led to believe that the epic broadening that we're so familiar with nowadays – and that is undeniably effective in its own way – was part of the great Talich's interpretative legacy. That is Kubelík's option, too, and most others follow suit. Speaking personally, in this particular passage I much prefer fire to majesty. Incidentally, regarding the

first-movement exposition repeat, a noted Dvořák authority advised me that the composer himself preferred it not to be played. Interesting, eh?

AA Oh well, there's no accounting for taste! I recall he also forbade the exposition repeat in the mighty opening *Allegro non tanto* of the Sixth Symphony – and that includes 14 extra bars of the most entrancing music imaginable.

I suppose we should attempt a summing up? If this nourishing exercise has proved anything, it's only reinforced my profound wonder at – and boundless gratitude for – Dvořák's giddy melodic fecundity and miraculous powers of organisation. Goodness, how effortlessly fresh and inevitable it all sounds! So, while this Berlin *New World* may not even be Kubelík's finest, for me at any rate it still possesses sufficient songful ardour, beaming affection and architectural splendour to place it towards the top of an insanely long list of interpretations I wouldn't want to be without (and we haven't yet mentioned Toscanini, Stokowski, Walter, Dorati, Fricsay, Reiner, Szell, Rowicki, Barbirolli, Kempe, Saitner, Zdeněk Mácal, Bernstein, Masur, Mackerras, Andris Nelsons...). Anyway, I promise I won't leave it as long before listening to it again!

RC Me neither, though a question remains: what are the ideal ingredients for an effective performance of the *New World*? Kubelík in Berlin offers so much, especially in the way he shapes the music: you can tell that the interpretative principles are sound, it's just that the accent isn't quite right. I'd second all the names listed above as recommendations (especially Walter, Fricsay, Reiner, Szell, Rowicki, Saitner, Mácal and Masur), but were I to recommend a Kubelík *New World* it would definitely be the Mercury 'single microphone' recording with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. There's grit to spare, as well as energy, drive and a lyrical slant to the phrasing. As you say, Berlin is fine for 'Sunday best', but for me the *New World* is where I want to be once I've cast off my glad rags, not while I'm wearing them. Do you actually feel the elements tousle your hair in Berlin?

AA No, I don't, but let me single out one last, deeply affecting example of that inimitable 'lyrical slant' you rightly mention. Beam to 7'43" in the finale and marvel at the surge of emotion coursing through that achingly tender arc of melody so typical of the composer. It genuinely slays me every time. Very special, very Kubelík. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Hans Christian Andersen

The Dane's writings are known the world over and, as demonstrated by **Andrew Mellor's** recording selection, their fantastical nature and clear narrative have inspired composers from the 19th-century to the present day



The Little Mermaid, about a young mermaid who falls in love with a prince, inspired Zemlinsky's emotive tone-poem

A few years ago, after endless delays and admirable persistence, an amusement park opened in Shanghai dedicated to the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen. Chinese children and their families are invited to clamber over fabricated ugly ducklings, attempt to locate the princess's pea and enjoy rides that mimic the elegant glide of an undersized mermaid. Andersen was chosen as the park's star because he was 'a hardworking person who was not afraid of poverty', according to comments made by one of the wealthy investors at the park's opening.

Quite what Andersen would make of his 21st-century role as a poster boy for Communism is anybody's guess. What's certain, as underlined by Shanghai's new attraction, is that Andersen travels. He always did. English translations of his works first popped up in 1846, the year before the author started hanging out with Charles Dickens in London. Both men championed the downtrodden and both had a certain gift for character, even if Andersen's was rather more childlike. What distinguishes the Dane, in his fairy tales at least, is a directness and clarity that cuts through world cultures with ease. *The Emperor's New Clothes* remains as much a straight allegorical story perfect for children as it does a useful shorthand for a sophisticated psychological concept.

Andersen's most popular stories – the simple and the supernatural – aren't particularly ripe for operatic treatment. History bears that out. And yet composers the world over have been drawn to his works. Tone-poems and ballet scores are the best of them, music in which the writer's gift for the fantastical – and his clear narrative pay-offs – can be indulged. His poetry made its way into songs by Schumann and Grieg, both of whom, like Mendelssohn and Gade, he sought out and got to know personally. Consolation, perhaps, for the writer's own failed musical ambitions. **G**



Nielsen
Nature Study (The Sun Shines on the Neighbour's Yard)

Tina Kiberg *sop*
Tove Lonskov *pf*

Danacord

Nielsen was only nine when Andersen died. But the two artists had much in common, not least their origins in relative poverty on the Danish island of Funen. Nielsen set a handful of Andersen songs, but this is perhaps the most straightforward and revealing – a text that tells of happiness without the trappings of luxury, in music that, like so many of Nielsen's songs, does the same.



Schumann
Lieder, Op 40
Christian Gerhaher *bar*
Gerold Huber *pf*
RCA Red Seal (7/08)

Andersen was only 35 and newly translated into German when Robert Schumann alighted upon some of his poems, deeming them 'so wise, so clever, so childlike'. Schumann's settings of four poems in his Op 40 set – including the emphatic 'Der Spielmann' and the unsettling 'Der Soldat' – offer a teasing premonition of what might have been; the opera the two of them had planned and corresponded about had the kibosh put on it by the composer's death.



Kantelinen
The Snow Queen
Finnish National Opera
Orchestra / Tuomas Kantelinen
Online

Andersen's story of the Snow Queen, the ice-cold demon dressed in a white fur coat with a penchant for stealing children, makes for a near-perfect ballet scenario if you can handle the lack of romance. You probably won't miss it in this sumptuous, evocative score from Finland's pre-eminent movie composer, Tuomas Kantelinen (*b1969*). Good and evil clash with cinematic clarity and colour in this indulgent but thrilling score.



Lang
The Little Match Girl Passion
Theatre of Voices; Ars Nova
Copenhagen / Paul Hillier
Harmonia Mundi (1/10)

David Lang's response to the chilling story of a destitute girl's rapid death won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for music. Lang (*b1957*) has spoken of the story's 'naïve equilibrium between suffering and hope', and his music for small assembly of voices and piquant percussion hauntingly echoes that – moving from biting cold to the faint, catching heat of faith in life after death. Helmut Lachenmann's setting of the same story is also available – on ECM (5/05) and Kairos (8/02).



Reinecke
Die wilden Schwäne
Narrator; Soloists; Schwänen-Ensemble / Peter Kreutz *pf*
CPO

As a result of shifting 19th-century borders, the German composer Carl Reinecke was technically born a Dane. But it was probably more Reinecke's atmospheric, even 'magical' musical language that drew him to fairy tales, including Andersen's story *The Wild Swans* – resembling *The Snow Queen* but with rather more darkness. The only recording of Reinecke's idiosyncratically scored musical telling for singers, piano, ensemble and speaker is as unusual as it is entertaining.



Enna
Hans Christian Andersen Overture
NDR Radio Philharmonic
Orchestra / Michael Hofstetter
CPO

Denmark eventually turned its back on August Enna (1859-1939), a composer of Sicilian-Danish roots who was a notorious hothead. Enna wrote a sizeable orchestral-vocal reflection on *The Little Match Girl*, but his well-built *Hans Christian Andersen Overture* is a more direct expression of both the composer's temperament and his regard for the story-teller (it's also the only piece with Andersen's name in the title).



Françaix
Le roi nu
Ulster Orchestra / Thierry Fischer
Hyperion (5/05)

Jean Françaix's fourth and most successful ballet at the time of its premiere in 1936, *Le roi nu* was a response to Andersen's most overtly witty and best-known tale, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Thierry Fischer's recording with the Ulster Orchestra points up all the score's precision humour à la Stravinsky but is good on musical story-telling too – not least the 'naked' orchestration that accompanies the king's donning of his imaginary attire.



Gudmundsen-Holmgreen
Moving Still
Paul Hillier *bar*
Kronos Quartet
Dacapo

This diptych tribute to Andersen from the most childlike of Danish composers, Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (*b1932*), uses the writer's short story *In a Thousand Years* (a prescient telling of how Americans will cross the Atlantic to 'see' Europe in one week) for its first part and the patriotic poem *In Denmark I Was Born* for its second (the composer processes the 'hymn' through influences from boogie-woogie to Arabic music). Gigantic little works, both of them.



Prauliņš
The Nightingale
Michala Petri *recs*
Danish National Vocal Ensemble / Stephen Layton
OUR Recordings (3/12)

This vision by Ūģis Prauliņš (*b1957*) of Andersen's story about a Chinese emperor who prefers a blinged-up mechanical nightingale to a real bird capable of genuine song (another prescient tale) is brimming with imagination and harmonic wonderment. The Latvian composer weaves Michala Petri's tweeting recorders around his singers as an ever-present, uncannily natural evocation of the nightingale itself.



Zemlinsky

Die Seejungfrau Czech Philharmonic Orchestra / Antony Beaumont
Chandos (2/04¹⁸)

Whether a result of his homosexuality or his series of romantic rejections in youth, Andersen had a troubled relationship with his own sexual desires and gave voice to his frustrations in *The Little Mermaid*. That story, about a young mermaid who falls for a being out of her reach (a land-dwelling prince), struck a chord with Dvořák (who also

incorporated other sources in his opera *Rusalka*) but more spectacularly with Zemlinsky – whose partner Alma Schindler had just ditched him for Mahler. Zemlinsky's magnificent tone-poem speaks of yearning for the unattainable, particularly in this recording from the composer's biographer and champion Antony Beaumont.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Finzi's Clarinet Concerto

It took almost three decades for this 1949 work to be recorded, and even then there's been more of a steady trickle than a glut of further offerings. Most, however, are worthy of a listen, discovers **Mark Pullinger**

The popular image of Gerald Finzi, who died 60 years ago this year, is predominately a pastoral one, his music often sneeringly damned with the same adjective. Although born in London in 1901 to a family of Italian-German Jewish origin, he was at his happiest in the English countryside. His shy, introverted character was largely shaped by his circumstances: his father died in 1909 and he'd lost all three of his brothers by 1918. During the Great War he and his mother moved to Harrogate, where he studied with Ernest Farrar, a pupil of Stanford. Farrar died in action in 1918. In the 1920s Finzi moved to the Cotswolds, where he composed song settings of Christina Rossetti and Thomas Hardy poems.

A HAMPSHIRE IDYLL

After a brief spell back in London teaching at the Royal Academy of Music, he moved with his wife, Joy, to the village of Ashmansworth near Newbury in 1939. There, Finzi cultivated rare species of apple trees in his orchard, collected books and edited music of 18th-century English composers. It was in this house at Ashmansworth that the couple's friend Vaughan Williams composed most of his Eighth Symphony. Finzi found peace in his Hampshire surroundings. There's a lovely photograph (right), taken by the composer's mother, of him – pipe in mouth, long socks wrapping his tweed trousers – atop St Catherine's Hill, Winchester.

I myself have clambered up that hill many times, with its splendid views overlooking the River Itchen's water meadows down at St Cross; and it was while living in Winchester that I took up the clarinet. The 'Carol' from Finzi's Five Bagatelles was among my first repertoire pieces, and his Clarinet Concerto has long had a place in my affections.

The Five Bagatelles were completed in 1943 and premiered by Pauline Juler. 'They're not worth much, but got better notices than my decent stuff,' the composer complained. When Finzi was commissioned in 1948 to write a work for the following year's Three Choirs Festival (Hereford), he decided to compose a concerto for Juler, but her upcoming marriage was to cut short her concert career. Finzi turned instead to her teacher, Frederick Thurston, Britain's pre-eminent clarinetist. During the 1920s Thurston had played in the orchestra of the Royal Opera House, before becoming principal of the newly formed BBC Symphony Orchestra, which he left in 1946 to focus on chamber music. Although Finzi's concerto was premiered by Thurston, it was still dedicated to Juler.

Unusually for Finzi, the concerto was composed fairly quickly. The premiere took place on September 9, 1949, the composer himself conducting the strings of the London Symphony Orchestra. Those orchestral forces were significant, for during the Second World War, Finzi had created an amateur group called the

Newbury String Players, with whom he initially refused to perform his own music, instead promoting the works of other composers and, in the process, developing great understanding of writing for strings. There is an undeniably pastoral hue to the concerto's solo writing, but critics who dismiss it in this way fail to acknowledge the knotty string-writing Finzi employs.

COMBINING VIGOROUS STRINGS WITH MISTY NOSTALGIA

I love the Clarinet Concerto for its mellow, almost Brahmsian quality – balancing zestful energy with autumnal repose. The first movement (*Allegro vigoroso*) is in vigorous C minor, with the strings, divided into multiple parts, setting up an argumentative, obdurate introduction. This has an Elgarian feel to it (shades of the Introduction and Allegro), full of semitone clashes and rising bass-lines. The clarinet fails to take the bait, responding in soft, lyrical manner, marked in the score as *in modo lirico*. Twice more the strings attempt to whip up a tempest, but the clarinet becalms them tenderly until furiously stung into action with a rhetorical cadenza, inserted after the premiere at the suggestion of Vaughan Williams in time for a subsequent Oxford performance. The movement closes, the clarinet finally piqued, with a sequence of 10 angry *fff* trills. The rhapsodic slow movement – *Adagio ma senza rigore* – has become very popular. It is introspective and undemonstrative.



At ease in the country: Finzi in 1925, photographed by his mother on St Catherine's Hill, Winchester

Finzi was a noted composer of song, the qualities of which can be heard in his soaring solo writing. Muted first and second violins answer each other in the opening bars, possibly inspired by the slow movement of Elgar's Violin Concerto. Brief clarinet cadenzas – arabesques with barely any accompaniment – follow, growing to an impassioned climax before the strings' mutes come back on and the movement fades away to nothing. It's one of the most wistful slow movements written for clarinet.

The *Allegro giocoso* rondo finale is a joyous C major affair. After a jaunty 11-bar introduction, the clarinet steals in with an innocent melody in English folksong style, gloriously taken up by the strings. A more sober 3/4 theme intervenes, occasionally hesitant, but the rondo returns. The material then slows down until Finzi reintroduces the theme from the concerto's first movement – what Michael Kennedy (in notes for the Marriner recording) called a 'misty nostalgia' – before the clarinet insists that the concerto ends with an impetuous flourish.

THE FIRST RECORDINGS

Although premiered in 1949, the concerto had to wait until 1977 for its first recording. Why did it take so long? Finzi and Thurston, both born in 1901, died very young – Thurston in 1953, Finzi three years later. Had Thurston lived longer he would undoubtedly have recorded it. The concerto was taken up by plenty of clarinetists, including Sir Colin Davis, who performed it with Finzi's own Newbury String Players in 1952. It was Thurston's wife (and former pupil), Dame Thea King, who did much to popularise the concerto. It also came to prominent attention in 1978 when it was performed by Michael Collins in the final of the very first BBC Young Musician of the Year competition. A steady trickle – rather than a glut – of recordings followed, and the concerto is now regarded as Finzi's finest work. Here I've considered a dozen available recordings, all but two recorded with English orchestras; in addition, I have commented on Collins's first recording, which would have been included in the discography had it not been unavailable.

The first recording of the concerto was with **John Denman** for Lyrita, which finally transferred to CD in 2007. The New Philharmonia Orchestra under Vernon Handley – a loyal supporter of British repertoire – is on thrilling form, luxuriantly rich in the finale. Denman colours his playing with gentle vibrato, although the close recording highlights a tone that occasionally thins in the upper register. Tempos are on the relaxed side, indulging



Relaxed approach: both John Denman (the first to record the Finzi) and Richard Stoltzman favour broad tempos in their interpretations of the Concerto

the improvisatory spirit of the solo writing, particularly in a spellbinding account of the middle movement. Around the time of this recording, Denman emigrated to the United States, where he pursued his interest in jazz.

There are some lovely session photos accompanying a YouTube clip, with Denman and an extravagantly neckerchiefed Handley under the watchful eye of Joy Finzi. Not one of these photos makes it onto Lyrita's CD cover, which instead features a youthful Yo-Yo Ma (soloist in the Cello Concerto) instead.

Thea King holds a very special place in the concerto's history. Thurston's star pupil and widow (tragically, he died the year they were married), she recorded

it in 1979. It was Hyperion's very first release (on special offer at £3.99 in 1980, going up to £4.99 in 1981!), to which is attached a charming story. Unconvinced by her recording, King was sent a copy of the booklet-notes by label founder Ted Perry. He had shamelessly exploited her love of cows on the cover, which featured George Vincent's painting *Trowse Meadows*. King was won over. The rest is history.

It's a superb account, which deserves to be in any collection. The performance is well paced, almost brisk at times. King's tone is mellow, but with an almost complete lack of vibrato, which draws away any hint of over-sentimentality. Her *pianissimos* in the *Adagio* are exquisite,

and the rondo is gently amiable.

The Philharmonia sounds heavier here than on Lyrita's recording, lacking the golden sheen it displayed under Handley.

CANTERS AND SLOW BURNS

A radio broadcast by Janet Hilton (1978) was briefly available from the BBC years later. Neither that nor George Macdonald's ruminative account with the Northern Sinfonia (ASV; 2/1987, 2/1988) is currently available. Nor is Michael Collins's 1987 recording on Virgin Classics (8/88), which is a great shame because it would be a real contender. I've always admired Collins's rich tone – like a full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon – and the way he shapes melodic lines. His rapt

POETIC READING

John Denman Lyrita © SRCD236

John Denman's recording – the concerto's first – still holds up remarkably well. It is relaxed and improvisatory, with the New



Philharmonia Orchestra providing glorious orchestral backing under Vernon Handley. It's wonderful to have this Lyrita recording available on CD at last.

THE THURSTON CONNECTION

Thea King Hyperion © CDH55101

Dame Thea King provides a direct link back to Finzi and the concerto's premiere. Thurston's widow – and star pupil – is an



important link between the composer and the new generation of performers, and this Hyperion disc will hold sentimental value for many listeners.

ALTERNATIVE TOP CHOICE

David Campbell Clarinet Classics © CC0057

Bursting with character and detail, David Campbell's version on Clarinet Classics boasts vital support from Aurora Orchestra.



Fast-paced and carefree, but not without sensitivity. Campbell employs plenty of *rubato* in a refreshing performance that vies for the top spot.

playing in the *Adagio* is extremely moving. Unlike King, with whom he studied, Collins employs a warm vibrato, and in this dynamic account he brilliantly carries off the trills at the end of the first movement. Richard Hickox draws muscular playing from the City of London Sinfonia.

Alan Hacker's account is one of the concerto's few disappointing outings on disc. He canters through the opening movement (about a minute-and-a-half faster than Denman) and his tone is pinched and weedy in places. The *Adagio* bowls along, devoid of any sense of poetry, even suffering reed blemishes and a buzzy quality to the clarinet's chalumeau register. William Boughton's English String Orchestra is poorly recorded – distant and tinny, but suffering Nimbus's notorious reverberation; but this doesn't do enough to disguise some distinctly ropery playing. One to avoid.

If a slow-burning account appeals, then **Richard Stoltzman** on RCA could do the trick. His tempos are very broad, especially in the *Adagio* – which nearly crawls to a full stop. I don't mind the slow speed, but Stoltzman's vibrato is extremely wide (you could drive a coach and horses through it), which rules it out of contention. He comes off the long trill at the climax of the *Adagio* most inelegantly. The intonation of the Guildhall String Ensemble veers towards the acidic – being a smaller ensemble should give them more sinew, but here they just sound anaemic. This version is now only available as part of a 10-disc Stoltzman box from RCA.

Emma Johnson went one step better than Collins, winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year crown in 1984. Her recording of Finzi's concerto (paired with Stanford's on ASV) met with widespread acclaim – a fact that, I confess, has always mystified me. I find her tone nasal and uningratiating, her phrasing choppy. She uses a lot more *rubato* than, say, King, which gives the *Adagio* a fine sense of fantasy, even if it loses some of the pastoral colour as a result. Her dynamic range is wide and she is partnered well by Sir Charles Groves and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Robert Plane gives a very fine reading for Naxos, playing with the Northern Sinfonia, of which he was principal clarinet at the time. His playing is fluent and purposeful, with plenty of character; he is suitably indignant at the close of the first movement and displays an emphatic chalumeau register in the second. He shades dynamics with great sensitivity and the rondo is wonderfully good-natured. The reverberant acoustic (in an unnamed Newcastle venue) fogs the strings rather,

though the playing is nice and gritty.

'Not difficult, very melodic, but modern in a piquant manner,' was Jack Brymer's pithy comment on Finzi's concerto in his 1976 book on the clarinet. It's a shame that Brymer never recorded it, but his immediate successor as principal of the London Symphony Orchestra, **Andrew Marriner**, did. It's a family affair, with his father, Sir Neville Marriner, at the helm of his Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Although Marriner Snr brings out well the inner detail of the orchestral writing, the playing is not as thrilling or rich as some versions. Andrew Marriner, however, has a glamorous, rounded tone, of melting beauty in the *Adagio*, where he discovers lovely colours and dynamics. He is immensely secure in the exposed upper register and uses limited vibrato to warm the sound. There's a fine lilt to the finale, where the *pizzicatos* trip along merrily.

CASTING THE NET BEYOND ENGLAND

You wouldn't, perhaps, expect a recording of the Finzi to emerge from Bulgaria, but Miami-based **Margaret Donaghue's** account was set down, for some mysterious reason, with the Russe State Philharmonic Orchestra. They make a firm, muscular sound, but their intonation falters,



Sarah Williamson produces a 'chocolatey sound' on her Somm recording

particularly in the slow movement. This is masked, to some degree, by excessive reverberation, but it still lets down the solo playing, which is often very fine. Donaghue has a dark tone and imbues her playing with plenty of character, even if the recording rarely allows her to scale down to a true *ppp*.

Canadian **James Campbell** offers a very direct, no-fuss account on CBC. His dry, woody tone is pleasing, with sensitive vibrato, and he is exceptionally secure in the upper register, but there's little sense of fantasy or poetry. The outer movements fare best, even if the rondo

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1977 Denman New Philh Orch / Handley	Lyrita (P) SRCD236 (4/77*, 8/07)
1979 King Philh Orch / Francis	Hyperion (CD) BDH55101 (11/80*)
1987 Hacker English Stg Orch / Boughton	Nimbus (P) NI5665; (S) NI5210 (12/88*)
1990 Stoltzman Guildhall Stg Ens / Salter	RCA (S) 88691 98911-2 (9/91*)
1991 Johnson RPO / Groves	ASV (P) CDDCA787 (6/92)
1995 Plane Northern Sinf / Griffiths	Naxos (B) 8 553566 (12/98)
1996 A Marriner ASMF / N Marriner	Decca (M) 473 719-2DH (9/97*)
1997 Donaghue Russe State PO / Sleeper	Centaur (P) CRC2453 (7/01)
1999 J Campbell Manitoba CO / Streatfeild	CBC (M) SMCD5204
2008 D Campbell Aurora Orch / Collon	Clarinet Classics (P) CC0057
2009 Williamson Orch of the Swan / Curtis	Somm (P) SOMMCD244 (6/10)
2012 Collins BBC SO	Chandos (P) CHAN 10739 (1/13)



Image: Mariza © Carlos Ramos

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finale is taken at rather a sedate pace. Under Simon Streatfeild, the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra sounds a little short on numbers, but acquits itself well in a reverberant venue.

NEW CONTENDERS

British clarinettist

David Campbell was the next to record the Finzi, this time on the Clarinet Classics label. It's an account that is positively bursting with character and detail. Campbell produces quite a dry sound, but his playing is imaginative, employing plenty of *rubato* in his phrasing. He is aided by the fabulous playing of Aurora Orchestra (in its infancy in 2008), its strings sounding rich and sweet under Nicholas Collon, sensitively veiled at times, but big and beefy at others. The *crescendo* and *accelerando* leading up to Campbell's first-movement cadenza is superb. The *Adagio* soars lyrically, taken very swiftly (it's the fastest on disc), yet where Hacker sounds garbled, Campbell makes it sound perfectly natural. The carefree rondo finale is hugely uplifting, a lively jogtrot with meringue-light *pizzicatos*, and the reminiscence of the first movement's theme is poignantly done.

Another BBC Young Musician finalist to set down the Finzi on disc is **Sarah Williamson**. Her luxuriant, chocolatey sound dominates the sound picture and there are many lovely things about her playing. She gives her first movement cadenza a timid doubting quality, like a soliloquy from *Hamlet*, and gives the *Adagio* an air of mystery. There is a touch of shrillness to her playing in the rondo, not helped by the balancing of Somm's recording. The accompaniment from Orchestra of the Swan is a little pedestrian, demonstrating less imagination than the soloist, especially when heard in close proximity to Aurora Orchestra for Campbell. David Curtis's *rubatos* don't always convince, too often coming across as clunking gear changes – thus catching a hesitancy in the performance.

Disappointing as it is that **Michael Collins's** Virgin Classics recording is not currently in



'Mesmerising': Michael Collins and, inset, with Chandos producer Brian Pidgeon

the catalogue, the good news is that he re-recorded the concerto in 2012 – and it surpasses that earlier version. Here he plays with (as well as conducts – the only soloist to do so on disc) the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He draws clean, crisp playing. The BBC strings have a robust sound – the brusque opening certainly meets Finzi's instruction of *Allegro vigoroso*! Collins's approach is extremely rhapsodical, using *rubato* to mould melodic lines. There is a liquid quality to his phrasing, always sensitive to dynamics. The brief cadenza displays his ripe tone and velvety chalumeau, with compact trills to bring the movement to a tumultuous close.

Spectral violins open the *Adagio* with haunting beauty. Collins's tempo is daringly slow (12'24") but it comes off as a melancholic elegy, veiled strings providing a warm cushion of sound. There is a smoky quality to Collins's playing in *alt* that is quite mesmerising. The rondo gambols and frolics as it should,

the final flourish triumphantly banishing the ghosts of those first-movement reminiscences.

THE VERDICT

Those two earliest studio recordings lay a very special claim to the concerto. Denman's is a poetic reading, superbly supported by Handley and the New Philharmonia Orchestra; and King's personal connection to the work gives her recording an added aura, despite her unsentimental approach. In recent years, her Hyperion recording has been challenged by two of her pupils, David Campbell and Collins. Campbell benefits from the outstanding playing of Aurora Orchestra – the best on disc, to my mind; while Collins's rhapsodic performance surpasses his earlier effort.

The latter's pacing of the slow movement may not be to everyone's taste (in which case Campbell's Clarinet Classics disc may prove a safer choice), but I am utterly convinced by the rapt atmosphere he and the BBC SO weave in this pastoral scene. In superb Chandos sound, Collins is now my top choice for Finzi's concerto, just pipping Campbell, although both deserve a place in any collection of English music. **G**

TOP CHOICE

Michael Collins Chandos © CHAN 10739
Michael Collins's second recording surpasses his very fine first. It is a rhapsodic, poetic interpretation, with a drawn-out *Adagio*



which may not suit all tastes. Superbly recorded by Chandos, Collins himself directs the string players of the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

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PLAYLISTS

Two listening guides: one from John Rutter, and one that fuses classical music with art

Composer-conductor John Rutter creates a playlist based on his musical friendships, while James Jolly's celebrates painters in music. Listen to them both at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

Musical friends

John Rutter picks tracks linked to his longstanding friends and colleagues

One of the greatest rewards of a musician's life is the variety of friends you pick up along the way, and I love to be reminded of them in music. There are the composers I've met: my school friend John Tavener, and Herbert Howells, Benjamin Britten, George Shearing (I premiered his *Songs and Sonnets*), Bob Chilcott, and Tarik O'Regan – who wrote a wonderfully consoling *Nunc dimittis* in memory of my son, Christopher.

Among my mentors I remember Edward Chapman who encouraged my early compositional efforts at school (John Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* was written for his memorial service); then at Cambridge, David Willcocks, Director of King's College Choir, who first got me into print. Among performers, my treasured friends include pianist Howard Shelley whom I taught to drive when we were schoolboys; Elin Manahan Thomas and Melanie Marshall, who both soared into the solo world after singing in professional choirs, including my own Cambridge Singers; and whole groups I'm associated with – the RPO, The Bach Choir, and the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain. I am proud to have known them all.

- **Tavener Dum transisset Sabbatum** King's College Choir / Willcocks **Decca**
- **Clara Sanabras Miranda's Dissent** London Voices; Britten Sinfonia / Brough **Smudged Discs**
- **John Tavener Funeral Ikos** St John's College Choir / Robinson **Naxos**
- **Chopin Impromptu in A flat** Shelley **Chandos**
- **Howells Sine Nomine** The Bach Choir; Bournemouth SO / Hill **Naxos**
- **Britten Voices for Today** National Youth Choir / Parry **NYCGB**
- **Mozart Laudate Dominum** Manahan Thomas; Aurora Orch / Rutter **Collegium**
- **Trad Sometimes I feel like a motherless child** M Marshall; BBC Concert Orchestra /



John Rutter celebrates some of the friendships with musicians and composers that have enriched his life

Rutter Collegium

- **Shearing Who is Silvia?** Cambridge Singers; W Marshall / Rutter **Collegium**
- **O'Regan Nunc dimittis** Clare College Choir / Brown **Collegium**

The first complete recording of John Rutter's 'Psalmfest' is available now on Naxos

Painting in music

James Jolly explores the intersection between music and the visual arts

Employing one art form to reflect another has its dangers – the quip, credited to Martin Mull, that suggests that 'writing about music is like dancing about architecture' is a salutary warning. But musicians have long been fascinated by other art forms, the plastic arts among them, and numerous great works have resulted. Painters (like Cavaradossi in Puccini's *Tosca* or Mathis in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*) and sculptors (like Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*) have provided key characters in opera, and, in less physical form, given the impetus for instrumental and orchestral works – think of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (heard in Ravel's orchestration more frequently these days than Mussorgsky's piano original), Vladimir Jurovski's *Russian Painters* (individual portraits of seven artists), Petr Eben's haunting *Chagall Windows* for trumpet and organ

or Paul Veress's *Hommage à Paul Klee*.

Francis Poulenc wrote a powerful song-cycle called *Le travail du peintre*, a work that engages with some of the most cutting-edge painters of his day (Picasso, Chagall, Braque, Juan Gris, Klee, Miró and Jacques Villon) using poems by Eluard. And for a more musical-theatre approach to painterly creativity, how about Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George* – George being the *pointilliste* Georges Seurat.

- **Puccini Tosca** Callas; Gobbi; La Scala / de Sabata **Warner Classics**
- **Hindemith Mathis der Maler** Bavarian RSO / Kubelik **Warner Classics**
- **Berlioz Benvenuto Cellini** BBC SO / C Davis **Philips / Decca**
- **Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition** Brendel **Philips / Decca**
- **Jurovski Russian Painters** M Jurovski **CPO**
- **Eben Chagall Windows** Balsom **Warner Classics**
- **Veress Hommage à Paul Klee** A Schiff Teldec / Warner **Classics**
- **Poulenc Le travail du peintre** Bernac; Poulenc **BNF**
- **Sondheim Sunday in the Park with George** Original Broadway Cast **RCA**



The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with

Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Live music-making and reviews of online concerts, including Salonen's Stravinsky tribute, and three symphonies from major maestros at the helms of a trio of Scandinavian orchestras

Cinemas nationwide

Teatro alla Scala: The Temple of Wonders, May 26

This beautifully shot docu-film tells the story of Milan's La Scala, leading the viewer through the main historical, musical, social and political events in the opera house's 238-year history by way of centuries of archive material. This material ranges from the words of musicians, experts and aficionados through to photographs, musical scores, paintings and film. It's on for one night only, so catch it while you can. For a sneak peak first, check out the trailer on *Gramophone's* website – part of a feature on the film published back in February. discoverarts.co.uk; gramophone.co.uk/features

Wigmore Hall & online

115th anniversary celebratory concerts, May 31 and June 1

Wigmore Hall is celebrating its 115th birthday across a number of special concerts, and we've picked these two for mention because you can watch them live, remotely, on the Wigmore's recently launched live-stream facility. May 31 is a gala concert of Schubert repertoire featuring pianists Elisabeth Leonskaja and James Baillieu, Cuarteto Casals, soprano Sophie Bevan, mezzo-soprano Alice Coote, tenor Allan Clayton and baritone Henk Neven. The following night offers a programme of two Bachs, JS and JC, from period group Arcangelo under the direction of Jonathan Cohen, with soloists violinist Isabelle Faust, flautist Rachel Brown, and soprano Anna Lucia Richter.

wigmore-hall.org.uk

Southbank Centre at St John's, Smith Square & BBC Radio 3

Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts Stravinsky, June 2

Part of the Philharmonia's 'Stravinsky: Myths and Rituals' series, this concert away from the orchestra's Southbank Centre base features a programme of Stravinsky's late ecclesiastical works alongside his musical tributes to personal friends. On the programme are the *Requiem Canticles*, *Introitus (TS Eliot in Memorium)*, *In Memorium Dylan Thomas*, *Mass*, *Elegy for JFK*, and *Cantata*. Salonen conducts, David Edwards directs, and the soloists are mezzo-soprano Héléne Hébrard, tenor Allan Clayton and bass David Soar. The concert is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

philharmonia.co.uk/stravinsky;
southbankcentre.co.uk; sjss.org.uk;
bbc.co.uk/radio3

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the 'Pathétique', from Oramo in Stockholm

Tchaikovsky

Sakari Oramo leads an engaging account of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. An expansive opening sees Oramo in no hurry leading up to the big theme, but the *Allegro vivo* is attacked enthusiastically. The 5/4 waltz has plenty of grace, with Oramo swaying back and forth. He builds up excitement well in the March, neatly avoiding applause by launching straight into a somewhat dry-eyed *Adagio lamentoso* finale.

Oramo is an amiable presence on the podium, his fluid baton technique describing big arcs. The camerawork reveals plenty of close-ups – so close that you can read the name of the company providing acoustic ear protection to the wind players – although the excruciatingly



slow crossfades are a little indulgent. 'Conductor-cam' captures every trickling bead of sweat. Neater details include seeing the French horns' mutes employed. Bright strings and piccolo are well captured, the general sound full and rich.

Mark Pullinger

Available to view, free of charge, by visiting rspoplay.se

Philharmonic Studio, Salford MediaCityUK & BBC Radio 3

Colin Matthews's 70th birthday concert broadcast, June 15

The Royal Northern College of Music is celebrating composer Colin Matthews's 70th birthday year with a two-day 'In Focus' festival celebrating his work, under the artistic direction of Clark Rundell. Running from June 15-16, it features music by Matthews (who is also a Fellow of the RNCM) performed alongside new works by RNCM students. This particular June 15 concert sees the BBC Philharmonic under Clark Rundell perform Matthews's Violin Concerto, featuring violinist Daniel Pioro, and *Broken Symmetry*. It will be broadcast at a later date on BBC Radio 3.

rncm.ac.uk/festivals/in-focus-colin-matthews/

Aldeburgh Festival & BBC Radio 3

Pierre-Laurent Aimard performs Messiaen's Catalogue d'oiseaux, June 19

The centrepiece of this year's Aldeburgh Festival is a complete performance of Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, which consists of 150 minutes of solo piano music depicting

77 different bird species. With the teeming birdlife of The Maltings, Snape, and RSPB Minsmere as the backdrop, the festival's outgoing Artistic Director, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, is performing the work live on BBC Radio 3, spaced across four concerts taking place between 3.30am and midnight to correspond to the times of day the composer envisaged when he first composed the work.

aldeburgh.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Wigmore Hall & BBC Radio 3

Les Ambassadeurs, June 20

We've been enjoying the music-making of French period ensemble Les Ambassadeurs in *Gramophone's* reviews pages for a number of years, and now the group is making its Wigmore Hall debut as part of the regular lunchtime series broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. Directed as always by flautist Alexis Kossenko, the programme includes a violin sonata from Pisendel, two concertos for flute, two violins and continuo (one by Michel Blavet, the other by Leonardo Leo), an overture by Leclair, and Vivaldi's Concerto in A minor for recorder,

two violins and continuo, RV108.
wigmore-hall.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

London, Cambridge, Brighton, Chipping Campden, Salisbury & BBC Radio 3

Vox Luminis UK tour, May 11 – June 2

Belgian early music vocal ensemble Vox Luminis, winner of the *Gramophone* Recording of the Year and the Baroque Vocal Award in 2012, is bringing its *a cappella* repertoire to the UK for its first major tour of the country. Directed by Lionel Meunier, their first four concerts feature English Renaissance works from composers including Tallis, Sheppard, Weelkes, Byrd and Morley. For the final concert in Salisbury, the focus changes to choral motets by the Bach family. Vox Luminis's tour takes in London's Cadogan Hall (May 11), Cambridge Early Music (May 12, and live on BBC Radio 3's In Tune that day), Brighton Festival (May 13), Chipping Campden Festival (May 14) and Salisbury Festival (June 2, broadcast June 6 on BBC Radio 3).

voxluminis.com; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Glyndebourne & cinemas nationwide

Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, June 21

We can't all get to Glyndebourne but most of us can get to a cinema, and Annabel Arden's brand-new production of Rossini's comic operatic masterpiece is set to be one of the company's season highlights this year. An interesting trivia tidbit is that the opera hasn't been staged at Glyndebourne since 1982, but in our opinion the two real draws are the fact that the London Philharmonic Orchestra will be conducted by Enrique Mazzola – an expert in this genre, whose reading will be well worth hearing – and that Danielle de Niese stars as Rosina. This will be a live cinema broadcast.

glyndebourne.com

St John's, Smith Square & BBC Radio 3

Trinity Laban Piano Showcase, June 21

The name says it all. This concert, broadcast

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Mahler's Second Symphony from the Gothenburg SO and Saraste

Mahler

Symphonie fantastique of its time or Wagnerian death-to-life concert rite? Jukka-Pekka Saraste tries to have it both ways in this *Resurrection* Symphony. That he nearly succeeds is impressive in itself, and largely thanks to some smoothly contoured playing from the Gothenburg SO that stands outside the usual parameters of weight or impact by which the piece is commonly measured. There is some self-consciously applied string *portamento* and too-neatly vernacular brass, but the voice-leading and timbral balance is soundly post-Classical: it's always clear where Mahler's themes are going, even up and down the peaks and troughs of some strenuous focus-pulling from Saraste in the event-laden outer movements.

'Urlicht' gets off to a rocky start in the brass, and too much time is spent looking over Anna Larsson's shoulder while she sings. Her lower range has darkened and the vibrato widened since the days when she was Abbado's alto of choice in this symphony, but she can still project an



Erda-like authority. Saraste expertly stage-manages the finale's Berliozian experiments with physical space, and there's a delightfully inflected 'bird of death' solo from the orchestra's piccolo player. Soprano Hanna Husáhr's contribution is as poised as she is herself poorly lit, the crowning source of spiritual pay-off in a Mahler Second that doesn't play to type and benefits much from Saraste's long experience in French, Scandinavian and contemporary music. **Peter Quantrill**

Available to view, free of charge, at gso.se/en/gsoplay

live on BBC Radio 3, sees Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance showcasing three of its top pianists. Jenna Sung performs Haydn, Rachmaninov and a modern miniature by Stephen Montague, composed for her Wigmore Hall debut in 2014; Gen Li performs Beethoven and Liebermann; and Giulio Potenza performs Janáček's *Sonata 1.X.1905*. sjss.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Nézet-Séguin conducts the Berlin Phil, June 23

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Philadelphia

Orchestra's Chief Conductor and regular guest of the Berliner Philharmoniker, conducts the great German orchestra in Shostakovich's powerful Symphony No 13, *Babi-Yar* – the composer's lacerating accusation of anti-semitism by the Soviet regime. The orchestra is joined by Russian bass Mikhail Petrenko and the men of the Berlin Radio Chorus. The symphony closes a concert that opens with Lisa Batiashvili performing Bartók's First Violin Concerto – a yearning work inspired by Bartók's unrequited love for a violinist. The concert is being streamed live. digitalconcerthall.com

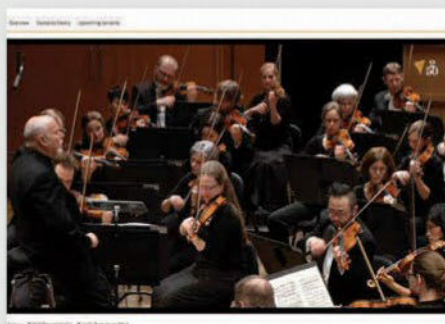
ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

David Zinman makes a guest appearance with Norway's Bergen Philharmonic in Dvořák's Seventh Symphony

Dvořák

Last February, David Zinman was a guest of the Bergen Philharmonic in its 250th anniversary season. Dvořák's mighty Seventh Symphony was the final item on the programme, and it's hard not to be won over by a reading of such self-effacing musicality, sureness of purpose and touching poetry.

The American maestro (who turns 80 in July) secures some delectably alert and articulate playing from his meticulously prepared Bergen orchestra, the



Grieghallen acoustic possesses a lovely, russet-brown warmth, and there are no

flashy gestures from the podium to contend with. Not unlike his mentor Pierre Monteux's October 1959 Decca recording with the LSO, Zinman's is the kind of 'less is more' performance that sneaks up on you unawares (the finale has plenty of muscular fibre and generates a most persuasive cumulative impact), while all the time radiating a beaming affection, gentle wisdom and glowing humanity. And that's just fine by me. **Andrew Achenbach**

Available to view, free of charge, at digitaltkonserterhus.no

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St Salvator's Chapel Choir of the University of St Andrews in collaboration with leading young period instrument ensemble *Ars Eloquentiae* and the *Fitzwilliam String Quartet* perform a programme charting the evolution of the Credo from Bach's great *Mass in B minor* via works known to, and performed by, Bach during the work's composition.

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THIS MONTH A fascinating digital duo from a small British company; a taste of a possible hi-fi future; and what does it matter where your audio equipment is made?

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

JUNE TEST DISCS



This striking performance of Liszt's piano transcription of Beethoven's Ninth on Alpha benefits from a crisp, clean 24-bit recording.



This thoughtful and thrilling, demonstration-quality reading of Elgar, Holst and Walton by Steven Isserlis should be in any collection.

New speakers, receivers and turntable add-ons

Whatever your area of hi-fi interest, there's always something vying for your attention



One of the most famous names in British audio is marking the birthday of its founder with some special-edition speakers. The ATC Signature Edition SCM10SE speakers **1** arrive as Billy Woodman reaches 70, and the model is a celebratory version of one of his landmark designs. Available in a run of just 70 pairs and selling for £3491, the new speakers are finished in ATC piano blue gloss lacquer and come with silver-finished aluminium tweeter waveguide and mid/bass driver surround, plus a fine-grain leather finish to the baffle. The speakers have all-new drivers, the SCM10's treble unit being replaced with a newly developed SH25-76S 'S-Spec' 25mm dual-suspension design, and the original SB45-125SC 125mm mid/bass unit with the latest version, using ATC's familiar soft dome. The crossover has been reworked to suit the new drivers and, like the rest of the speaker, is hand-built at the company's factory in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

On the subject of speakers, new to the UK market is the Larsen loudspeaker range from Sweden **2**, which is designed to work with the acoustics of the listening room and to stand flush against the wall. The company says that, rather than being designed and measured in anechoic conditions, as are most speakers, its models are built to use sound

reflections from the walls of the listening room to enrich the listening experience rather than degrade it. The bass drivers work with the room wall to develop low frequencies, while the mid-range and treble units are at the top of the enclosures in a shaped mounting, firing outwards and upwards at different angles, surrounded by absorbent material. The company says that this gives a large, spacious, deep and wide sound stage that holds up as you move around the room – so no need to fight over that one single 'sweet spot' when listening with friends. Distributed in the UK by Sound Foundations, prices start at £995 for the compact 4.2 floorstander and rise to £3995 for the flagship Larsen 8.

New from Onkyo are the latest two receivers in its 2016 release programme, the £849 TX-RZ710 and the £1049 TX-RZ810 **3**. Both models are ready to decode both Dolby Atmos and DTS-X 'extended surround' formats – the latter via a forthcoming firmware upgrade – as well as handling the latest 4K/HDR ultra-high-resolution video. Both models offer a range of network audio capabilities, including DLNA and internet radio, Spotify and Tidal streaming, and GoogleCast, AirPlay, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity. Also built in is compatibility with the forthcoming FireConnect

multiroom system from Blackfire Research, which enables multichannel music to be distributed in both digital and analogue, along with high-resolution video. In addition, newly designed audio circuitry gives the two receivers extended frequency response: Onkyo says that they can deliver bass all the way down to 5Hz.

Moving from surround sound to vinyl records, two newly launched accessories are designed to ensure your LPs are at their best before you play them. The first is the latest version of the demagnetiser first launched by Japanese company Furutech in 2006: the latest DeMaga **4** is designed 'to discharge the magnetism that resides or builds up in LPs and optical disc media (CD, DVD, SACD etc), thereby improving their sonic performance'. The DeMaga has been much discussed since its launch, with some claiming excellent results and others saying 'what's to demagnetise? LPs are plastic!' The latest Alpha version, selling for £2200, offers 20 per cent greater demagnetising power and touch-panel controls for ease of use.

Finally, and perhaps on less controversial ground, is the new record-cleaning machine from the German turntable manufacturer Clearaudio **5**: the £3250 Double Matrix Professional Sonic model. It combines double-sided vacuum cleaning of a disc, halving the time taken for the process, with sonic vibrations designed to loosen dirt in the groove for more effective removal. Bi-directional rotation further enhances the cleaning, while the adaptive cleaning brushes automatically adjust to different record diameters and thicknesses. Manual and automatic processes are available, with adjustable speeds, while a 'Super Clean' mode to tackle really dirty discs could be ideal for those charity shop finds. **G**

● REVIEW LEEMA ELEMENTS PRE-AMPLIFIER AND POWER AMPLIFIER

Miniature amps have power that belies their size

It may be one of Britain's lesser-known audio manufacturers but this combination shows that Leema Acoustics has the ability to mix it with the big names

Behind the best-known names of British audio – the likes of Bowers & Wilkins, Linn, Meridian, Naim and Tannoy – there's a phalanx of lesser-known brands, or rather brands known and followed by avid enthusiasts. Many of them are still manufacturing products here; and while they sell in relatively small numbers and tend to be pitched at the upper end of the market, these are no 'two blokes in a shed' operations but rather brands taking their time to develop, engineer and build fine-sounding products.

Leema Acoustics is one of these 'just below the radar' companies. It was founded in 1998 by two former BBC engineers, Lee Taylor and Mallory Nicholls – hence, as they say, the name. Initially the plan was to explore the limits of compact loudspeakers, the two wanting to create something compact but with a much bigger sound. Four years of work ensued, resulting in the launch of the acclaimed Xen speaker, originally designed as a better nearfield monitor for recording and broadcast. Recently revived as the £1295/pr Xen 2, this model is truly tiny, with a front baffle no bigger than an A5 booklet, yet it's capable of exceptional bass extension. Despite its minute dimensions, giving it an internal volume of just five litres, the current model has a -6dB response all the way down to 57Hz – remarkable for a speaker so small – and extends up to 25kHz, while twin front-venting ports make it suitable for use close to a wall or even on bookshelves.

Having developed the original Xen, which has spawned a range of Leema



ELEMENTS PRE-AMPLIFIER

Type Pre-amp with built-in DAC

Price £1395

Digital inputs Coaxial/electrical, three optical, USB Type B

Analogue inputs Three on RCA sockets, one balanced (XLR)

Analogue outputs Pre-outs on RCA phono and XLR

Other connections LIPS remote control

Digital file formats Up to 192kHz/24bit

Accessories supplied Remote handset

Dimensions (WxHxD) 22x8.8x34cm



ELEMENTS POWER AMPLIFIER

Type Stereo/mono power amplifier

Price £1295

Power output 55Wpc into 8 ohms, 160Wpc into 2 ohms (stereo); 210W into 8 ohms, 365W into 4 ohms (mono)

Inputs RCA phono and XLR

Outputs One pair of speakers, RCA phonos (for 'daisy-chaining')

Other connections LIPS remote control

Dimensions (WxHxD) 22x8.8x34cm

leema-acoustics.com

speakers (including the Xero, Xone and Xeta), the duo moved on to designing electronics to make the most of them. They started with the Tucana in 2006 and then expanded into source components with the Antila CD player a year later.

At the same time, the company started working with an electronics manufacturer in Welshpool, close to 700-year-old Powis Castle. Davlec had its roots in equipment for the dairy industry and was expanding into automotive and other areas. Now, after some years of close cooperation, the two companies share the premises in which the current Leema line-up is made, all products being handbuilt.

As the name suggests, Elements is the company's entry-level offering, with models including an integrated amplifier, a CD player and a phono pre-amp. The pairing we have combines pre-amplifier with a built-in digital-to-analogue converter, and a power amp, very much in the modern mould: many DACs these days have variable analogue output, enabling them to be used straight into a power amp for a minimalist electronics package, and at the same time products designated as pre-amplifiers increasingly have onboard digital-to-analogue conversion.

Selling for £1395, the prosaically named Elements Pre-Amplifier offers a choice

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The design of the Leema means it can be used with computers or CD players/transports...

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO CXC



The £300 Cambridge Audio CXC is designed purely as a CD transport, with no built-in digital-to-analogue conversion. It's just the thing to feed the Leema.

LEEMA XEN 2 SPEAKER

Perfect partners? The Leema Xen 2 speaker, at £1295/pr, is both truly tiny and an ideal match for the compact Elements electronics.



of five digital inputs – three optical, one coaxial/electrical and an asynchronous USB on a Type-B socket – plus four analogue inputs: three on conventional pairs of RCA sockets and one using a pair of balanced XLR connectors. There's also a 3.5mm input socket on the front panel, along with a headphone output, driven by its own internal amplifier, while outputs to a power amplifier are provided on both balanced and RCA phono sockets. Apart from sockets for Leema's own LIPS control system and a system remote handset, that's about it.

Slightly unusual here is that the digital section here is limited to 192kHz/24-bit,

Compact they may be but they prove both beautifully built, with a real feeling of quality about them, and able to deliver excellent insight

even on the USB input, whereas these days there are digital-to-analogue converters able to handle even higher sample-rates and greater bit-depths, not to mention various versions of the DSD format used for SACD and now enjoying something of a comeback in the 'computer audio' age. How much of a drawback is the Leema's 'limited' digital capability? Well, that's really a matter of personal taste; but it's worth noting that downloads offering file formats beyond 192/24 are very much in the minority, and for most current needs this pre-amp will prove more than adequate.

The £1295 Elements Power Amp shares the same compact design as the pre-amp but is of a novel design in that it can be used as either a stereo or mono amplifier. That has clear advantages when it comes to future upgrading: if you wanted, you could start with the amplifier running in stereo, where it will deliver 55W per channel, and later add a second amplifier and run both in bridged mode, at which point each will deliver 210W.

The use of a fairly hefty power supply means the Leema also claims 92Wpc into 4 ohms and 160Wpc into 2 ohms in stereo mode, or up to 365W into 4 ohms in bridged mono, while the provision of that LIPS remote control system, an internal gain adjustment allowing fixed or

variable level and rear-panel switches for mode selection make this a very flexible power amplifier. There are also pre-out sockets, allowing amplifiers to be 'daisy-chained', for example when bi-amplifying suitable loudspeakers.

PERFORMANCE

Compact the Leema components may be but they prove both beautifully built (in a choice of black or silver finishes with white-on-blue displays), with a real feeling of quality about them, and able to deliver excellent insight with no shortage of power and control. I only had one power amplifier to hand, so was unable to explore what could be done in the monobloc mode, but even running in stereo the little Leema amp sounds mature, confident and exceptionally involving.

What I really like is that this combination seems to impose nothing of itself on the music – in other words, it doesn't really have a 'sound' as such. Crisp, clean and neutral, it manages to be both forceful and delicate, never overstressing the music or giving that sense that it's either trying too hard or struggling to handle the dynamics of what's being played. The bass is well extended and capable of richness and warmth, but also well-controlled and fast when required, while the treble is open and explicit without ever seeming over-bright or harsh.

Those characteristics enable the Leemas to deliver music such as the Fournier Piano Trio's set of Mendelssohn works with both generosity and spark, doing a fine job with both the tonalities of the instruments and the complexities of the scoring. At the same time, it has a glorious sense of scale and close focus with the recent Steven Isserlis recording of the Elgar and Walton cello concertos, rendering the great sweep of the orchestra and the intricate detail and rich timbre of the solo instrument with equal conviction.

This pairing may not fit the convention of high-end amplifiers as huge, hefty boxes but it proves more than up to the task of driving big loudspeakers to room-filling levels with large-scale works. The deft, well-controlled sound is both hugely impressive in hi-fi terms and entirely enjoyable on a musical level, making

Or you could try...

The Leema combination is a particularly neat solution when it comes to combining digital-to-analogue conversion and amplification in just two compact boxes.

Quad Artera

However, it's not unique, and one could also try the Quad Artera components, reviewed last month, selling for £2898 for the combination of the Play CD player/digital pre-amplifier and Stereo power amplifier. That's rather more than the £2690 tag on the Leema pairing, but then the Quad Artera Play does also incorporate a CD player for a more complete two-box system. For more details see quad-hifi.co.uk.



Denon Design Series

For a budget take on the same theme, you could look to the little Denon Design Series models, with their sleek black and aluminium finish and enclosures not much bigger than the Leemas. They don't have as much power as the Elements products but the PMA-50 amplifier has built-in digital-to-analogue conversion including USB Type-B for computer hook-up and can handle formats all the way up to DSD. It sells for £449 but it's possible to find it with substantial discounts – for more information see denon.co.uk.



Marantz HD-AMP1

For a similar design with even more performance, look no further than the Marantz HD-AMP1, a superb integrated amplifier in miniature, complete with DSD-capable DAC and excellent sound. Combining 'retro-look' styling with up-to-the-minute technology, this fine amplifier sells for £799. More details at marantz.co.uk.



this a combination well worth exploring. Leema may still be a brand unfamiliar to many audio enthusiasts and music lovers but on this showing it really deserves to be much more widely known. **G**

● REVIEW MERIDIAN EXPLORER²

Tiny amplifier, new format

The latest version of the compact DAC/headphone amp spearheads what could be audio's next big thing

The Meridian Explorer has featured in these pages before and I was very taken with this neat digital-to-analogue converter/headphone amplifier. Weighing just 50g, clad in a high-quality anodised aluminium shell and powered from its USB connection, it's an excellent device to use on the move between a computer and a good pair of headphones. Plug it into the computer's USB socket and connect the headphones, and you instantly have a high-quality music system wherever you happen to be.

More recently the Explorer has been upgraded, creating the Explorer²: still handbuilt in the UK and still selling for a very sensible £199, the new model has gained additional digital signal processing (DSP) capacity for better sound as well as compatibility with the MQA format.

Plug in the Explorer and you instantly have a high-quality music system wherever you happen to be

What's MQA? Well, though it has been developed by Meridian, the 'M' in the initials doesn't stand for the company name. Instead, the format is called Master Quality Authenticated and is a new carrier for lossless audio files, designed to allow higher resolutions to be downloaded or streamed using much less bandwidth. Well, when I say it's a new carrier, the official launch of MQA was late in 2014 and the format had been much discussed before then. Developed by Meridian founder Bob Stuart, it uses what its creator describes as 'audio origami' to 'fold down' hi-res audio files for transmission or storage, then unfold them at the player end. The process needs an encoder at one end of the chain and a decoder in the playback equipment but has the advantage of back-compatibility with existing equipment. Players without an MQA decoder will simply play the files in the 'container' resolution in which they are downloaded, stored or streamed; those with the decoder will 'unfold' the files to reveal their true resolution.

A further refinement is the ability of the format to carry extended metadata describing how the files were recorded and mastered. An MQA decoder will be able

to interpret this information and set itself up to best reproduce the music as it was mastered in the studio. As Stuart explains it, 'Music lovers need no longer be short-changed; finally we can all hear exactly what the musicians recorded. MQA gives a clear, accurate and authentic path from the recording studio all the way to any listening environment – at home, in the car or on the go. And we didn't sacrifice convenience.'

The format has already received expressions of support from recording and mastering engineers, labels, streaming providers and hardware manufacturers: the likes of 7Digital, Tidal, Bluesound, Onkyo and Pioneer are on board, although to date only Norway-based label 2L has made content available on a commercial basis and Meridian is the only company with hardware on sale.

So the Explorer², together with files available from 2L's excellent 'Test Bench' free download site at 2l.no/hires, is the best way to get a taste of what MQA can offer – although it must also be acknowledged that the Meridian DAC/headphone amplifier is also an excellent device for non-MQA files too.

PERFORMANCE

The Explorer² is easy to set up. No drivers are needed when it's connected to Mac computers and Windows drivers are provided as a free download, and after that the unit is just plug-and-play. There are white LED indicators to show what file format is being converted – up to 192kHz/24bit, plus MQA of course – and there's a choice of fixed-level analogue output, for example for connection to a conventional hi-fi amplifier, or variable level for headphones.

Both of these are provided on 3.5mm stereo sockets and, though the volume on the headphone socket is controlled using the connected computer, within the Explorer² the adjustment is made in the analogue domain for the best possible audio quality. The audio input is on a standard mini-USB socket: one is supplied but you could substitute a longer one if required, or an 'audiophile' USB cable if that takes your fancy.

Within the device, all incoming signals are upsampled to 176.4kHz (in the case of 44.1kHz/88.2kHz content) or 192kHz



MERIDIAN EXPLORER²

Type Portable USB DAC/headphone amplifier

Price £199

Inputs Digital audio on mini-USB socket

Outputs Fixed and variable level analogue, both on 3.5mm stereo sockets

Formats accepted PCM at up to 192kHz/24bit, MQA

Accessories supplied Carrying case, USB cable

Dimensions (WxDxH) 10.2x3.2x1.8cm

meridian-audio.com

(for 48kHz/96kHz source material), with 176.4/192kHz files being converted in their native form. The three indicator lamps show the input format, with the 44.1/48kHz one turning green when an MQA file is being received or blue when a newly mastered artist/producer-approved 'MQA Studio' file is detected.

I used the Explorer² both into my existing reference system and with a range of headphones up to the excellent but rather demanding Oppo PM-1. In each case the Meridian exceeded expectations, with a sound packed with detail and entirely involving. It's a little difficult to draw direct comparisons between the MQA-encoded files and the originals, even when the 2L site provides both for download: the original DXD files here are in 352.8kHz/24-bit, which of course the Explorer² can't handle.

However, it's clear that the MQA sample files here at least match the 192kHz/24-bit or 96kHz/24-bit downloads of the same tracks, with an appreciable increase in dynamics, focus and airiness when compared to the CD-quality versions available on the 2L site also played through the Meridian. That the MQA files do so at a fraction of the size of the 'hi-res' PCM downloads – comparing a movement of a Mozart violin concerto shows that 192/24 is a 338MB file, the 96/24 171MB and CD quality 49MB, with MQA at 98MB – makes both a convincing case for the new format and also for the Explorer² itself as a future-proofed travelling companion. **G**

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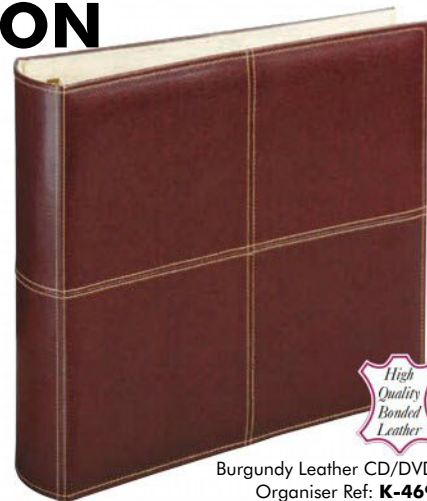
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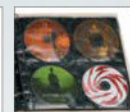


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● ESSAY

All change in the world of consumer electronics

Mergers, moves and acquisitions: some of the best-known names in hi-fi and consumer electronics are finding new ways to ensure their survival in a difficult market place

You never know when the hi-fi and consumer electronics industries are going to wrong-foot you: over a period of not much more than a month, one of Japan's most famous electronics brands was sold to a Taiwanese company; a famous British name announced plans to close its last remaining factory in the UK; and perhaps the world's best-known 'style' audio company called off long-running takeover talks with a Chinese investor.

That covers Sharp, Tannoy and Bang & Olufsen respectively – but then, just as I was getting my breath back, came the news that Bowers & Wilkins had been acquired by a small Silicon Valley-based start-up headed by a former Facebook executive. The announcement came out of the blue, on the eve of the world's biggest specialist hi-fi show, High End 2016, in Munich.

It seems even the best-known brands are in need of investment to secure their futures

Without a doubt the global consumer electronics landscape is changing, and it seems even the best-known brands are in need of investment to secure their futures. Having hit its centenary back in 2012 with record debts and tumbling sales, since when things have gone from bad to worse, Sharp has recently been acquired by Taiwanese company Hon Hai, but not without further pain: during the protracted takeover talks Hon Hai, better known as contract manufacturer Foxconn, claimed to have uncovered all kinds of additional liabilities and financial stumbling blocks revealing the true nature of the perilous situation in which the Japanese company found itself.

Hon Hai, which has huge production facilities in China and employs 1.3m people making a wide range of equipment for Apple, Sony and other companies, had long been courting Sharp. The two companies already jointly ran two LCD display screen plants – once seen as the pride of Japanese TV-making but now increasingly turned over to the manufacture of the more lucrative smaller panels for smartphones and tablets – and for a good while the



On the eve of the unveiling of its flagship 800 D3 loudspeakers, Bowers & Wilkins announced its acquisition by Eva Automation, a California-based electronics company

balance of power in the partnership had been shifting, leading to Hon Hai's eventual acquisition of two thirds of the Japanese company.

Tannoy, meanwhile, had found itself bought a while back by the Danish TCS Group, which in turn was swallowed up last year by the California-based Music Group, the makers of brands including Behringer and pro audio brand Turbosound. In April this year, Music Group announced plans to close the last Tannoy factory in the UK, the Coatbridge factory, with the loss of some 70 jobs. Research and development will still be carried out at the company's Manchester offices, but all production will move to Music Group's massive 280,000 square-metre facility in Zhongshan, China.

That means the company's traditionally-styled Prestige speaker range, so popular in the Far East, will no longer be made in the UK, and it remains to be seen how that move will play with those who prize

the 'Britishness' of the speakers. However, rumours circulating as these pages went to press suggested that the Prestige speakers might still be made in Europe – just not in the UK.

Bang & Olufsen, meanwhile, has long been courting a buyer in the face of falling sales, and for a while it looked like a deal was in the offing with Hong Kong-based Qi Jianhong, the largest shareholder in Sparkle Roll, the Chinese distributor for the B&O Play sub-brand. Sparkle Roll Group Ltd issued a slightly confusing statement, saying that the interest was being shown by a different private company owned personally by Qi himself, but with the same Sparkle Roll Group Ltd name, and then in April Bang & Olufsen terminated talks. By way of clarification, B&O chairman Ole Andersen said 'I can't rule out a future offer from Sparkle Roll or someone else, but it's the assessment of the B&O board that there won't be any offer from Sparkle Roll.'

Two weeks later, and with its share price having taken a tumble on the news, the company announced it was replacing its CEO of five years, Tue Mantoni, with Henrik Clausen, formerly Head of Global Strategy and Digital for telecoms company Telenor ASA.

So what of Bowers & Wilkins? Well, the announcement, made just days before the company's flagship 800 D3 speakers were due to be unveiled to the press, said that the 50-year-old Worthing-based company, with its 1000-strong workforce and its own factories in China as well as the plant in Sussex, had been bought by Eva Automation, a young Silicon Valley firm with a workforce of 40 founded by Gideon Yu. Eva says it is 'creating a disruptive consumer device that delivers amazing and new user experiences in the home entertainment sector,' but to date is yet to bring any products to market.

It remains to be seen how this one plays out, but a few things are beginning to emerge, notably that Eva will rebrand itself to Bowers & Wilkins, and that the Sussex firm's current CEO and majority shareholder, Joe Atkins, will remain as CEO of the new operation. In other words, it sounds like the company has new owners, but it's going to be business as usual.

After the industry's recent turmoil, that comes as something of a relief! ●

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NOTES & LETTERS

The vinyl revival • Menuhin and Beethoven • Mravinsky takes it slow

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To LP or not to LP...

I much enjoyed Andrew Mellor's piece on the great vinyl comeback (May, page 10). I, too, have fond memories of those lovely black records, especially when one removed them from their sleeve for that very first play.

Yet, nostalgia is by its nature selective. Casting my mind back to the dawn of the CD age I recall that what made me such an enthusiastic devotee of the new silver discs was their silent surfaces. No annoying, inexplicable 'clicks and pops' to spoil those great moments of music. Do we really want to return to those frustrating days? And then there were the dodgy pressings. I recall the pleasure of buying an LP of Richard Strauss's *Four Last Songs* (EMI), sung by the incomparable Lucia Popp, only to have the experience ruined by a combination of a poor pressing and an inexplicably low-level recording.

Roger Walker
Lichfield, Staffordshire

...the CD is the question...

I doubt very much if we shall see a massive revival of the LP record. The qualities of CD and downloads are such that quiet classical music is not ruined by surface noises. From what I can see, the vinyl revival is fuelled by young bearded 20-somethings on the look out for the latest thrill.

When I began buying vinyl 50 years ago, the chances were that I would reject three out of 10 records due to some defect. When CD came along we classical fans grabbed it and basked in the absence of surface noise, warps and swingers.

Cliff Milkward
Tipton, West Midlands

...which has Eurostar efficiency...

Of course LPs sound different – but better? I have travelled on trains hauled by Flying Scotsman and Sir Nigel Gresley, but beautiful, majestic and evocative as these machines are, I do not delude myself that they perform the task for which they were built with the speed, efficiency and environmental friendliness of a Eurostar.

Douglas Bateman
Epsom, Surrey

Letter of the Month

An unforgettable Menuhin performance

Reading your 'Never just a Violinist' article about Yehudi Menuhin (April, page 10) bought back an abiding memory of my early musical life. It was at the 1968 Edinburgh Festival. I had been in Prague earlier that year in the height of the Prague Spring and was then going to enjoy my first Edinburgh. We had tickets to hear Menuhin play Beethoven's Violin Concerto and on the day before the performance Russian tanks moved into Czechoslovakia crushing the freedom we had seen.

Menuhin walked on, raised a hand and uttered these words: 'In these dark hours that for me bring back memories of Europe's worst atrocities, I dedicate this performance of Beethoven's Concerto, as Beethoven did his life, to the indomitable spirit of mankind that will never succumb.'



Menuhin: musician and humanitarian

The performance had some of those later Menuhin lapses, but what a frisson there was throughout and the passion in the slow movement bought tears to my eyes as I remembered the Czech students whom I had met and felt concern for.

Richard Linsell
Harpenden, Herts

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...but what about 78s?

'Heavy, oversized, extortionate to ship...'

Add the words 'easily breakable' and surely you could also be writing about the LP's predecessors, the 78rpm shellac record or, even earlier, the phonograph cylinder.

Andrew Mellor's description of the ritual of playing an LP is even truer when it comes to playing a 78 record. An LP record plays for 20 minutes a side. But sharpen the fibre needle; wind up the gramophone; find the correct record in a mountain of dusty boxes and paper sleeves...don't drop it! And then you certainly listen carefully – even devotedly – for the full three minutes that a side of a 78 record will play before you repeat the ritual! Puccini had the length of a 78 gramophone in mind when he wrote his arias. Playing a 78 record provides concentrated listening – one of the virtues of LP suggested by Mr Mellor – but it does so in spades!

And what do you actually hear? In many cases a steeled 78 (a 78 record which has been played frequently with a steel needle) sounds like a band playing in a blizzard. But that can actually be a big part of its authentic appeal. People talk about a 78s sound and it can transport you to a bygone age, be it 1920s jazz or the voice of Nellie Melba emerging from the fog. On the other hand I defy anyone to improve on the almost pure or perfect sound my 1920s EMG Mark IX can produce via a pristine 78, the wonderful EMG soundbox and a really sharp fibre needle. For the full experience you can also place your head right inside the vast paper-mache horn.

Andrew Boggis
Beaminster, Dorset

Mravinsky's Shostakovich

Your article on Mravinsky (Icons, March, page 56) made me think of the time I noticed that, in his performance

of the Shostakovich Fifth Symphony, he takes a slow tempo at the end of the fourth movement. I wrote to Shostakovich about this. In his answer, he said that either a fast or slow tempo was acceptable. He indicated that his favourite performances were by Mravinsky, Bernstein and his son, Maxim.

Edwin R Kammin
Toronto, Canada

Editorial notes

The photo on page 29 of our Orchestral reviews section (May) was captioned 'Martin Yates and the RSNO'; in fact, this is of Johannes Wildner and the BBC Concert Orchestra at Watford Colosseum during recording sessions for the third volume of their Braunfels series for Dutton Epoch in November 2014.

OBITUARIES

A former Music Director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, a leading countertenor, and a violinist, concertmaster and professor

ROYSTON NASH

Conductor

Born July 23, 1933

Died April 4, 2016



Best known as Music Director of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company during the 1970s, Nash started life as a trumpeter, studying at the Royal Marines

School of Music. He later attended the Royal Academy of Music to study conducting, working with the likes of Rudolf Kempe, Constantin Silvestri and Sir Malcolm Sargent. He then returned to the Royal Marines rising to the post of Director of Music to the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth.

He led the D'Oyly Carte company during its centenary year, 1975, presenting all the Gilbert & Sullivan operettas in a single season. He recorded a number of them for Decca. In 1979 he emigrated to the US where he conducted a number of orchestras in New England.

BRIAN ASAWA

Countertenor

Born October 1, 1966

Died April 18, 2016



The Japanese-American countertenor Brian Asawa has died, aged 49. Asawa first became drawn to early music during his studies at UCLA, and in 1991, aged 25, became the first countertenor to win the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Three years later he also became the first countertenor to win Plácido Domingo's Operalia International Opera Competition. Debuts in music by Gluck, Handel and Britten soon followed over a successful decade which saw him

take on many of the leading repertoire roles for his voice.

Asawa's recordings reflect that spread of repertoire, including Oberon in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (on Philips, conducted by Sir Colin Davis – Alan Blyth describing his voice as 'luscious, vibrant') and solo discs including songs by Ned Rorem and a disc of lute music (both for RCA). Of a disc of Scarlatti cantatas conducted by Nicholas McGegan (DHM), Stanley Sadie praised Asawa's 'clear, ringing countertenor... a real feeling for Italian words and their place as part of the music and a welcome precision over detail'. More recently, Asawa launched a management company for singers and directors.

ALAN LOVEDAY

Violinist

February 29, 1928

Died April 12, 2016



Born in New Zealand, Loveday came to the UK after impressing a visiting Budapest Quartet who set up a fund to support his travels and studies.

He attended the Royal College of Music, studying with the great Albert Sammons. There he would perform with fellow students Neville Marriner, Cynthia Freeman and Amaryllis Fleming. He also played guitar trios with Fleming and both John Williams and Julian Bream. He later joined Marriner's Academy of St Martin in the Fields with whom, among other repertoire, he recorded Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, a best-selling recording for Argo. He also led Kempe's RPO and worked often as a session musician. He was a professor at the Royal College of Music, a position he held for 17 years.

NEXT MONTH JULY 2016



Nicola Benedetti

Charlotte Gardner speaks to the hugely popular violinist about her new recording of Shostakovich and Glazunov concertos

Latin America

Andrew Farach-Colton looks at how composers in Latin America have forged a vibrant and distinctive sound world

Max Reger

The advocacy of Schoenberg hasn't prevented Reger from becoming a peripheral figure. Gavin Dixon asks, why?

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















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Cerys Matthews

How a Welsh childhood shaped the musician and presenter's love of music – of all kinds

My earliest memory is of singing. A huge sow had jumped out of a trailer in front of us and hobbled down the country lane. What did we do but burst into song – 'Y Mochyn Du' ('The Black Pig'). It seemed my fate was sealed.

For every event in life there would be a soundtrack – every moment galvanised with music. Was I happy about that? I was obsessed. Music became everything, not just traditional Welsh songs, but music that varied from Puccini to Dylan, from *Cwm Rhondda* (we always sang at chapel, and always went twice on a Sunday) to Handel's *Messiah*. I was well and truly hooked.

There was always a piano at home, passed down through the female line from my great-grandmother – my grandmother was a mezzo-soprano, but marrying at 18 and the Second World War did nothing for her stage ambitions. I thumped at it in all moods, it was my best friend. And school? The jammy thing was being enrolled in a Welsh-language school, Bryn y Môr in Swansea. This meant music in every class. We sang in the bus on field trips, sang our maths times tables, sang as the seasons changed. We entered eisteddfods, recited, danced folk dances. Then the day came when a recorder was placed into my care. It was basically 'Three blind mice' and I was away.

Birthdays thereafter brought a different recorder model to my collection: fife, treble, bass, tenor. There were recorder courses back then in West Glamorgan, at a time when music funding wasn't threatened, and on one of these a teacher suggested I try out the oboe. Youth orchestra followed and became my gateway to heaven: added to that extraordinary feeling you get when a community comes together to make beautiful noises, was the off-stage camaraderie. My overriding memory, apart from travelling to London to play for Princess Anne at the Royal Albert Hall, is sitting, legs dangling out of windows of the Swansea University student digs where we'd stay. It was 1981, and 'Tainted Love' was top of the charts. We belted it out at full volume, the melody hanging in the summer air, then drifting out over the crescent-shaped bay.

I guess I've always been an advocate for the Duke Ellington school of thought: 'There are two kinds of music. Good music, and the other kind.' You can see this love for all genres and all eras in my weekly radio show on BBC Radio 6 Music. I'm a passionate advocate for sharing the best music available, regardless of the genre, of any hype or lack thereof, of what class, creed or tribe you belong to. I want to encourage people to keep their ears open, to judge it for themselves.

This has led to my involvement in the BBC initiative Ten Pieces, which aims to open the door to classical music for all schoolchildren. If you don't hear certain types of music, how will you ever learn to love it? Pop saturates our every waking



THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Purcell Music for Queen Mary
Westminster Abbey Choir / Martin Neary
Sony Classical (3/95)

I can't get enough Purcell. Its profundity allows you to find new shadows on each subsequent listen.

minute. At its worst it's repetitive, unimaginative and insistent – it cannot compare to the palette of sonic colours offered by the wealth of recordings and compositions we have available to us. I want to set the balance right.

With this ambition in mind, my festival, The Good Life Experience, also features cross-genre artists and music. It's held in September, on William Gladstone's estate, Hawarden. This year we are thrilled to present a UK exclusive of Max Richter's *Vivaldi Recomposed*, performed by The 12 Ensemble and Norwegian violinist Mari Samuelsen.

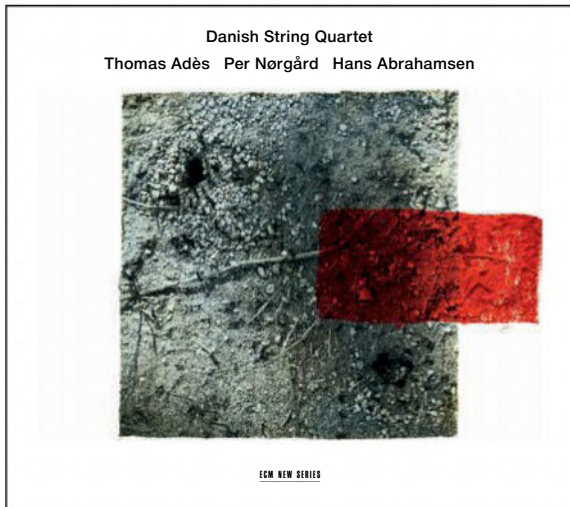
Classical music is a language best learned early, one we all deserve the chance to learn. Lang Lang is a shining beacon in this sense: in April he played for 5000 children at the Royal Albert Hall and, according to the interview he gave for my BBC World Service show, he has inspired 40 million Chinese children to play the piano. There's gold in them there hills, so give us Wagner for breakfast, we can have pop for tea! And in the meantime, just keep singing. **G** Cerys Matthews participates in Choir Clock in the Festival of Voice, Cardiff (festivalofvoice.wales), June 3-12. The Good Life Experience (thegoodlifeexperience.co.uk) is from September 16-18

Danish String Quartet

Per Nørgård
Thomas Adès
Hans Abrahamsen

CD 481 2385

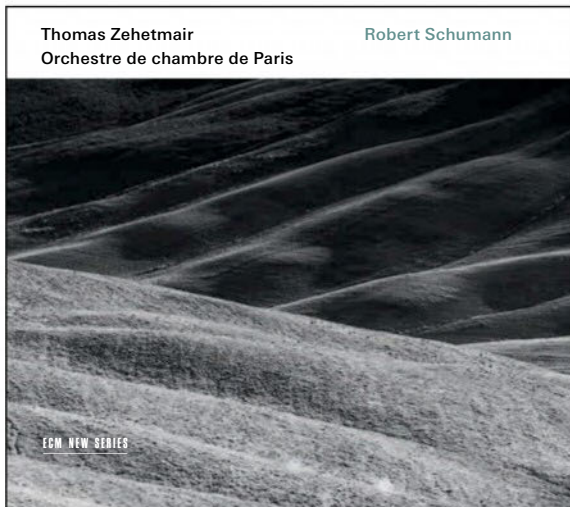
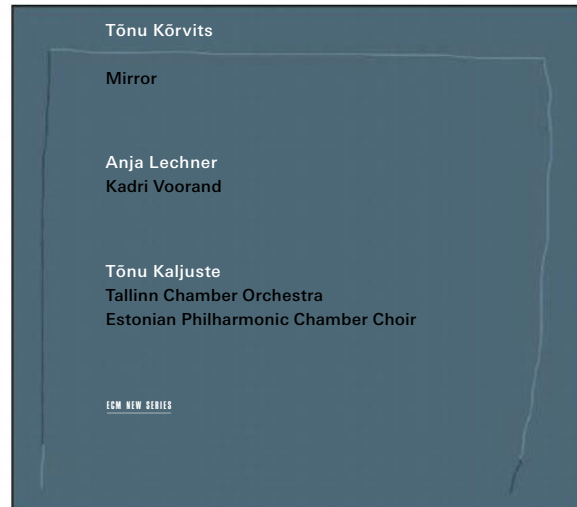
26 June, Wigmore Hall, London / 27 August, Queen's Hall,
 Edinburgh (International Festival) / 11 September, Wigmore
 Hall, London / 13 September, St Giles House, Wimborne



Tõnu Kõrvits: Mirror

Anja Lechner violoncello
Tallinn Chamber Orchestra
Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir
Tõnu Kaljuste conductor

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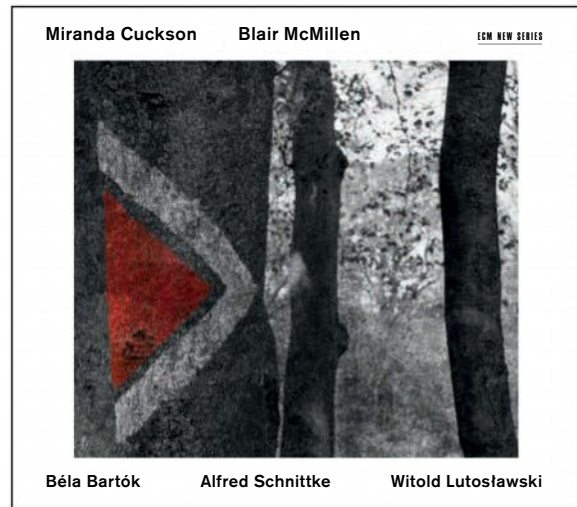


Thomas Zehetmair violin, direction
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 Violin Concerto
 Symphony No.1 "Spring"
 Phantasy for Violin and Orchestra

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10, 14, 15 June, Aldeburgh Festival
 1 August, BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall,
 London (Violin Concerto)



Miranda Cuckson violin **Blair McMillen** piano

Béla Bartók
 Sonata No.2
Alfred Schnittke
 Sonata No.2
Witold Lutosławski
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